No. 680. For Week Ending January 11th, 1902. [One Penny.

PEARSON'S

SHORT STORIES

A
WEEKLY MAGAZINE
FOR
HOME & TRAIN

ONE PENNY.

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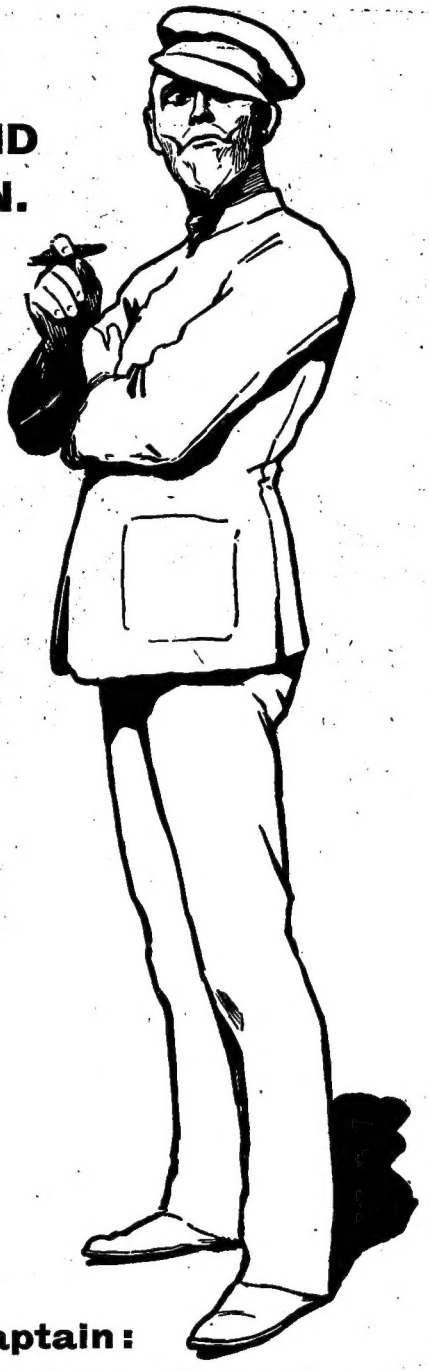
OUR OLD FRIEND AGAIN.



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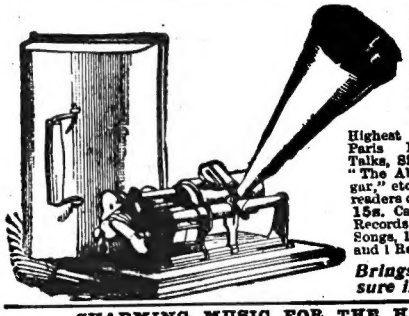

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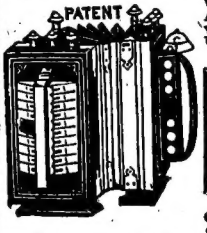

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SHORT STORIES

No. 680.] [One Penny.

For the Week Ending January 11th, 1902.

FROM THE GATES OF DEATH.

THE STORY OF A GREAT QUEST.

Being the sequel to "My Millionaire Patient," which appeared in *SHORT STORIES* dated November 23rd, 1901.

In Explanation.

Some ten years before the happening of the things herein contained, one Siever Crafte, a monstrously rich American, but a man with regard to whom mysterious rumour had much to say, called upon Dr. Septimus Ewles, then administrator of anæsthetics at St. Andrew's Hospital, London, late one night, at his private residence, after a preliminary visit on the morning of the same day, ostensibly as a patient.

Crafte, who was a man of strong will, by means of hypnotic influence, endeavours to bend the doctor to participation in his, Crafte's, schemes, which endeavour fails, through the timely intervention of Haidée Van Cloo, Ewles' betrothed.

Haidée had become casually acquainted with Crafte on a previous occasion in Paris, and owing to his unwelcome attentions, had contracted a deep feeling of disgust for him.

Crafte gone from the house, Haidée imparts her fears to her lover, which are only too surely verified by the successive, ceaseless persecution of the doctor by

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his millionaire patient. Day and night, here, there, and everywhere, does the American pursue, and torture the other by means of a diabolical system of whispered suggestion.

Then matters crystallise. Haidee writes to Ewles at the Hospital, making an appointment for him to meet her in Piccadilly. He keeps the tryst, but she fails to come. Next day reveals the fact that she has disappeared, and also, at almost the same hour, Siever Crafte, drops out of sight.

Detective Inspector Ryan, of Scotland Yard, then gives Ewles such information as leads him to believe that Haidee Van Cloo has gone away with Crafte. Whether willingly or by coercion, the doctor cannot say, the fact alone remains that the two vanished almost simultaneously.

Possessed with an overmastering desire for revenge upon the man whom he supposes to have wrought him this wrong, Ewles throws up his post at St. Andrew's, and only confiding in a medical friend, decides to go in quest of his enemy and his love.

The only clue to Crafte's movements is that obtained by Inspector Ryan, who discovers for the doctor that the American and a lady booked at Charing Cross for Frankfort, on the night of the 19th of June.

Frankfort, therefore, is obviously the first point of Septimus Ewles' search.

CHAPTER I.

THE OLD HOUSE IN THE JUDENSTRASSE, FRANKFORT.

IT was the evening of the 17th of January last year; within an hour of midnight, in fact.

Two men sat, one on either side a plain deal table, in an upper room, or roof-chamber, of a high, tumble-down old house, in the Judenstrasse, Frankfort-on-the-Main.

One of the twain was an elderly, slovenly, and not too cleanly man. Unmistakably a German Jew, he was spectacled, and boasted a long, unkempt, white beard, that descended almost to his waist.

He had an evil eye, had this same old Herr Isaachar Gaben, the most rascally money-changer the whole continent over; an eye which, in spite of yourself, forced itself upon you, as something to be unpleasantly reckoned with. But his words were as a mixture of butter and honey, so softly sweet were they.

Englishman was plainly written upon every point and feature of the other man. Well set-up, and with honest blue eyes that preached truth and kindliness every time they met your own, he yet looked to be harassed and worried; physically and mentally "run down" even.

"And so the Herr Doctor is resolved to seek out his American friend," the old Jew was saying (there was no doubt as to his Semitic origin); "well! well! The English are a wonderful people!—a wonderful people!"

"All that is beside the mark. I believe you to have information as to this man, Siever Crafte's present whereabouts."

"I have told you," replied the other, with a shrug that sent his shoulders up to his ear-tops, "I know him—this Herr Crafte, but—it is long since I saw him; two—th—"

"Saw him—yes!" broke in Septimus Ewles, impatiently, "but heard of him—no!—I am convinced that you and he are in close correspondence—you can't deny it!"

Herr Graben's naturally bad temper was only conventionally restrained, just as his oily politeness was but skin-deep.

"Find him!—you!—"—he snarled. "Me!—I know nothing!—I tell you nothing!—You come to me, and say: 'I want the Herr Crafte!—I *must* find him!' Well—find him!—it is your business—it is none of mine."

Septimus Ewles was about to reply to this tirade, when the room door opened softly, and a girl—or woman rather, for she was fully six or seven-and-twenty—entered, and approached the old Jew.

The old man, who had risen from his seat in the excitement of his last utterance, glanced at her angrily.

"Katrina!" he said, shaking his skinny forefinger at her vehemently. "Go away! I told you I would not be disturbed. Go away!"

It was a sad, a very sad face, that of the girl, a face implying much, and hard sorrow, patiently endured; much soul-depression, fought back in the face of great and terrible odds.

Still, with it all, there was a gleam of the higher intelligence in her eyes; an appearance of keen concentration in her attitude of passive attention to her father's semi-savage reproof.

"I did but seek to bid you to supper," she said, with a half-glance of curiosity at the stranger. "Will it please you to come now?"

"No! I am busy, cannot you see, slow-wit that you are, with the Herr Englishman. Go! I will come presently."

Was it fancy—or did Septimus Ewles really see a warning look in the girl's eyes, as she turned to move towards the room door? Was the finger upon the lip meant as a silent underlining of the warning?

It would seem so.

"Look you!" snarled the old Jew, after his daughter had left the room and closed the door. "Look you! What interest have I in finding this Herr Crafte, even supposing that I know where he is?"

"Then you *do* know!" quickly returned the other.

"I did not say so—I do not say so. But you have not answered my question."

"Because I have changed my mind."

"Well?"

"I came to you about this matter because it was told me (how, I prefer not to say), that you have, or had relations with the man I seek."

"Shu!—you do not know!—no one knows!" angrily interrupted the old man.

"That is as it may be," quietly went on his companion. "Now I have determined to do without your aid; although you have said quite enough to give me more than a fair clue to Siever Crafte's hiding-place. This, and something that has just occurred to me, has decided me to—well—to go to work my own way."

"I care not!—I care not!" cried the doubly-baffled Israelite, his cupidity unsatisfied; his curiosity with regard to the doctor's plans ungratified also. "You will never find him—this Herr Siever Crafte—never!—without me! Come!—give me—give me five hundred of your pounds—ten thousand reichsmarks, and I will find him for you."

"No!—my mind is made up—I will save my money—and—gain my end."

In sheer impotence of disappointed greed, the wretched old money-huckster leant across the table and snapped his claw-like fingers in the Englishman's face.

"Bah!" he almost screamed, "I will give *you*

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twenty thousand!—fifty thousand!—a million marks! if you find him!"

"Thanks!—that is very good of you," said Ewles rising, and taking his hat. "Perhaps I may have to remind you of the offer some day."

But Isaachar Gaben spoke no more. Taking up the lamp he made to light his visitor down the dark, rickety stairway of the crazy old house. At the first floor he stopped, and without word or sign, passed through into a room, the door of which stood open, leaving the doctor to find his way out as best he might.

It was as dark as Erebus. Down the creaky, bare staircase he felt his way—his only guide a faint streak of light, coming from the ill-fitting street door.

He was about to move the handle of the lock, when a soft touch upon his arm told him that he was not alone.

"Mein herr!" (he recognised Katrina's voice whispering in his ear), "I have heard your errand.

"Sh!—My father is right—by yourself you will never find the man you seek. But—(do not speak) start at once—this very hour—for Marseilles—there ship for Pekin by the shortest route. If you reach the Chinese capital before noon of the 2nd of March, you will hear of Siever Crafte in the smoking-room of the English club-house. Good night."

"Stay," whispered Ewles excitedly. "You have told me much, you must tell me more! Is—is there a lady with him?"

"No!—a thousand times no!"

"Do you know where *she* is?"

"You will know when you reach Pekin. But my father is stirring—sh!"

"Katrina!"

A light came out of the room on the first floor, and would soon have shone down the stairway, revealing the pair by the door.

She deftly, however, shot back the bolt, and gently pushing Ewles into the street, silently closed the door behind him.

At that moment half-past-twelve sounded solemnly from high up in the steeple of St. Bartholémy.

Setting his face in the direction of his hotel, Septimus Ewles looked up joyously into the star-flecked sky.

"Thank God!" he cried looking up, as if to ask sympathy from the lights of Heaven. "I shall find my love, and—my foe!"

CHAPTER II.

On the Trail.

It was in the early morning of February 23rd when Septimus Ewles landed at the Bund, Shanghai.

Everything had a new and strange flavour for him, his previous travelling experience having been limited to an annual Continental trip, and, five years before, to a three months' tour through the States. China-town, San Francisco, was the nearest like to anything celestial he had ever seen, although in itself Shanghai is too cosmopolitan, too much Westernised, to be altogether accepted as a genuine example of a typical Chinese city. As he saw it in the morning sun, from the deck of the fussy little steam launch that had gone out to meet the Pacific Mail steamer, *Orient Queen*, at the Woosung Bar, or "Heavenly Barrier," at the mouth of the Yang-tse-Kiang, lying, lustrously white, as a pearl upon the water, he thought it a sight beautiful beyond conceiving.

He had, before leaving London, been furnished with

The wretched old money-huckster leant across the table and snapped his fingers in the Englishman's face.

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sundry letters of introduction, addressed to well-known English people abroad, and it is with one of them in his hand, that he makes his way, by wheelbarrow conveyance, to a certain bungalow on the Sickaway road.

It is the house of the junior member of a large mercantile and banking firm, but now occupied temporarily by a harbour official, and Ewles' object is to procure such information as shall enable him to do the Pekin journey in the right way, and with as little delay as possible.

"Glad to know you, doctor!" said Captain Fearies, the deputy-master of the port. "Harrington tells me that this is quite a romantic expedition of yours. I have to tell *you* that it is, at this particular moment, a most dangerous one."

"Dangerous or not, I must go through with it," replied Ewles, "and as it is essential to its ultimate success that I should be in the capital on or before the 2nd of March, I shall look for your kind help to get me started on the road thither with all speed."

"Certainly, Dr. Ewles; I am at your service, and if you will have your traps brought here from the Custom House, and will make yourself at home with me until to-morrow morning, you shall be quite ready to leave for the North after a six o'clock breakfast."

Ewles, ordinarily a patient man, chafed at even this slight delay. He remembered how that every second of precious time, dropped or wasted, gave so much greater opportunity to his arch enemy to perfect his villainous scheme—if scheme he had—with regard to Haidée Von Cloo—his Haidée.

But at the specified time the next morning, everything was ready for him to leave Shanghai by the Tient-Tsin steamer.

The short passage to the mouth of the Peiho River, was remarkable only for one strange incident.

Among the two dozen or so passengers, was a tall Chinaman, of evident high rank and breeding. He did not mix with his fellow-passengers; perhaps because they were all, without exception, Europeans.

Anyway, he kept aloof, his courteous, dignified air and manner, preventing anything in the shape of unpleasantness and friction.

It was curious, however, that this celestial gentleman, without entering into conversation, or in any way seeking acquaintance, kept in the immediate neighbourhood of Septimus Ewles. Smoking, dining, constitutionalising on deck, the tall Chinaman, like a shadow, was by his side.

So persistent was this, that Ewles began at last to be worried by it, and more than once was on the point of taking steps to put an end to it.

Once, he could have sworn that he heard a noise in his cabin, an hour or so after he had retired. Certainly, as he sprang out of his bunk on to the deck, the door opened and shut suddenly.

By the time he had added something to his pyjamas a search of the corridor was useless—nobody was to be seen about, while the night steward, half-asleep, had neither seen nor heard anything extraordinary.

An indefinable suspicion prompted Ewles to make an examination of his berth.

His most cherished possessions, Haidée's letters, her photo, and a few other oddments, valuable only to a lover, he always carried upon his person; as also his letters of credit and introductions; but there was, of course, much in his baggage which would appeal to the cupidity of the ordinary light-fingered person.

The first thing he saw, upon turning up the swing-amp, was, lying upon the ground at the foot of his big trunk, a piece of narrow silk ribbon—such as would be used by a Chinaman to tie or lace his jacket with. It flashed upon him then that it was of the same colour as the tie-points of the tall celestial's outer garment.

A thorough search through his effects revealed nothing further, and Ewles turned in again, to dream of himself in the character of Sherlock Holmes, hunting down tall Chinamen by means of a violet ribbon clue.

Closely scrutinising, the next morning, the tall celestial, as he passed the deck, his head upon his breast, Ewles saw, to his wonderment, that the violet ribbon tie-points of the other's jacket were *intact, none of them gone.*

Determined, if possible, to get to the bottom of the mystery, Ewles, as he passed the Chinaman, drew out from his own pocket, as if by accident, the incriminating ribbon.

He was almost sure that the other was cunningly observing him from under his eyelids, but as for sign of this or of interest in the plainly displayed ribbon, there was not the faintest.

Thus matters stood until the mouth of the Peiho River was reached. Here, the tall Chinaman dropped into a large sampan, or semi-covered river boat, which under the deft impelling of a couple of long, broad bladed sweeps, quickly ascended the river towards Taku and Tient-Tsin, and was soon out of sight round a bend of the stream.

"Captain," said Ewles, to the captain of the steamer, "Do you know that fellow?"

"That tall yellow-skin? Well, I don't exactly know him; and yet I do, if you can make that out."

"Rather enigmatic; but perhaps you will kindly explain."

"Well, it's like this. About six months ago this same chap first began to make regular trips between Shanghai and this point. He always leaves the vessel in precisely the same unceremonious fashion, and I hear or see nothing more of him again until, perhaps, the next trip but one, and then this sampan meets us, the fellow springs aboard, and, exhibiting to the purser a perpetual pass from the owners, travels with us to Shanghai. What he does there, or at this other end I'm as ignorant as you are, sir, and now you know as much about him as I do, which isn't much."

"No; as you say, captain, it isn't much. But all the same I thank you for your informatory crumbs."

"Welcome, I'm sure."

"What time are we supposed to arrive at Tient-Tsin? I mean, how long does it usually take for the river boat you are expecting, to reach the Forts?"

"Something under six hours."

"Ah! I must be in Pekin by noon of the 2nd March. There will not be much time to lose."

Landing six hours later, Ewles found a Chinaman waiting for him. He had himself made no provision for the meeting, but was not long left in ignorance of how it was done.

"Missa Fleliss—he tellee me to meetee you."

"Tell you, man! why he's miles away."

"Yes! He one piecy big man—he tellee my bludder, one coaly-man on steamer-bloat—bludder tellee me—me tellee you—savee?"

Grinning from ear to ear, the Chinaman bustled about to get the doctor's few things together, and it was not long before the latter found himself located as a bird of passage at the only habitable hotel in Tient-Tsin. This place was kept by a Celestialised Frenchman, a character, and a strange mixture of east and west.

To him Ewles applied for information as to the best and quickest route to Pekin.

"M'sieu!—why you hurry? Everything good at the Hotel de France. Beside, perhaps M'sieu does not know that the Boxeurs are sounding the tocsin in the neighbourhood of the Ming Tombs. The Temple of Tsing-Tsoo is their rendezvous. M'sieu had better remain at the Hotel de France. *Ma foi!* Yes!"

"I leave here to-morrow morning before daybreak. Send in the Chinaman who came with me!"

"Now—what's your name?"

"Lung-How. You wantee me?"

"Yes; can you guide me to Peking?"

"Yes; Missa Fleliss, he tellee me to helpee you—savee?"

In spite of the landlord's protest, and endeavour to detain him in Tient-Tsin, Ewles was determined to press forward.

With Lung-How's assistance horses were secured and before the sun was up the pair were on their way.

There is a railway between Tient-Tsin and Pekin, but Ewles, for his own reasons, decided not to travel by it.

Half-way on their journey a strange thing happened.

Ewles and his guide were resting at mid-day in a small inn by the roadside.

No hing to eat or drink (except tea) is ever provided in these places, so that Lung-How was busy seeing after his master's commissariat.

A pattering of feet upon the road attracted Ewles' attention.

Looking out of the window he sees a litter, closed, attended by four armed Chinamen.

Lung-How also hears the commotion, and comes to see.

No sooner does he set eyes on the armed men than he whispers affrightedly to Ewles.

"Boxer!—Boxer!—all same fightee devils!"

The information does not so much alarm Ewles, as make him curious.

Walking out at the door of the wretched hostelry, he strolls towards the litter for a closer inspection.

Suspecting his intention, the truculent-looking attendants close round, crossing their spears and matchlocks by way of forcible prevention.

At this moment, and quite suddenly, one side of the litter is violently shaken, and moved back a little. A small white hand is seen vainly trying to move it further.

"I believe," said Ewles to himself, "that something wrong is going on here; but what can I do? these fellows would raise the neighbourhood if I lifted a finger."

The chief of the band perceiving the slightly opened side of the litter, made as if to close it, hitting the hand which still gripped the shutter a blow with his gun-stock.

A woman's cry, half-smothered, rang out.

"Good Heavens! Haidée!" shouted Ewles, endeavouring to break through the cordon.

Ewles fired at Crafte, who, throwing up his arms, fell backwards.

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But before he could reach the litter, a hoarse command was given; the litter was lifted by the four bearers, and, while Ewles was struggling vainly with the Boxers, who had him at a disadvantage in an angle of the yard wall, soon disappeared down a side lane leading off the main road.

CHAPTER III.

THE SECRET OF THE MING TOMBS BY THE GREAT WALL.

THE chief topic of conversation at the English Club in Legation Street, Pekin, at this time was the story of a new Boxer rising.

Said old Major Strangeways, "We are no sooner well through one trouble of this sort, than another is threatened—it's monstrous!"

"Ah! and that isn't all of it," remarked a smart-looking attaché—"You haven't heard, perhaps, that there is Yankee money behind the rascals."

"No!" exploded the Major. "I haven't; but I shou dn't be surprised."

"Oh! it's nothing to do with uncle Sam in his official capacity. It seems that there is an immensely rich Chicago man who, for some purpose of his own, is furnishing the rebels with funds. It is said that he is personally active in the affair, and that he moves about the country in the disguise of a Chinaman."

"God bless me!" said a grey-haired Secretary of Legation, nervously. "Do you think there's anything in it, Charteris?"

"Well, honestly, I do—Eh!" to the club-servant, who had handed him a card and a letter, "excuse me, gent'emen!"

Glancing at the card, and then opening and reading the letter, the young diplomatist bade them show in the stranger.

"Dr. Ewles! I am delighted to know you!. These two gentlemen are Major Strangeways, of His Majesty's 7th Hussars, and Sir Cecil Wray, our Secretary of Legation. Gentlemen, this is Dr. Septimus Ewles of London, who brings me a letter from my old friend Harrington."

After a desultory talk for a quarter of an hour, Charteris was asked to repeat for their visitor's benefit, the current rumour of the anticipated Boxer rising.

"Yes," the narrator concluded, "and to crown it all the man is strongly suspected of kidnapping an English lady who was known to have called at the consulate in Tient-Tsin, but who has since mysteriously disappeared. We are in possession of certain information from a tainted source, it is true, which almost makes this certain."

"Mr. Charteris," said Ewles earnestly (he had been listening with eager ears to the tale). "May I put a question or two to you?"

"A hundred, my dear sir."

"Well, then; in view of the certainty of your information as to the action of this pseudo Chinaman; this—Yankee Boxer—have you decided to take any steps to bring him to book?"

"Yes—we have; we know that the chief Boxer conspirators meet in the precincts of the temple of Ts ng-Tsoo, among the Ming Tombs, thirty miles north o' Pekin."

"Yes; and having that knowledge, what do you propose?"

"A party are starting to-night after sundown, with the object, if possible, of trapping this American dabbler in Chine e politics and British interests."

"Good! Now, will you let me (I have strong, very strong reasons for asking the favour) will you let me accompany the expedition?"

"Assuredly! Remain here for dinner, and come afterwards to the Legation with me. I am going myself."

By this time the Major and the Secretary were gone, and the two who were left talked long and earnestly together over their meal.

At last Charteris said, "Doctor, I honour your pluck and I only hope the result of it all may be as happy as you can desire it to be."

* * * * *

It is a wonderful place that where lies the dust of the old Ming dynasty of China.

For some distance around it, and especially towards its Southern approach, the landscape is desolation itself.

Sheer out of the barren, stone-strewed ground, rise at intervals colossal figures carved in stone of men and animals.

Though wide apart they form a striking avenue to the Temple of Tsing-Tsoo, which stands grim and solitary at the end of it.

Along this road, about an hour after midnight, a party of eight Europeans, accompanied by two Legation interpreters, and Ewles' attendant, rode silently and swiftly.

With almost criminal negligence the conspirators had omitted to provide sentries or scouts of any kind, so that the party approached to quite within the shadow of the Temple walls, without creating any suspicion of their presence.

The Tombs themselves lie at the base of a semi-circle of hills, which has something like a three mile radius.

"Now," said Charteris quietly, "the entrance to the underground vault, where our informant, a traitor, tells us the meeting is even now in progress, is just by the left side of the main flight of steps. Oh! there it is! That black hole!"

They all moved up close to it.

"Six men, including 'Our American Cousin,'" he continued, "are in conclave. I think we can manage them—what say you?"

Universal assent.

"Hark!" hoarsely whispered Ewles suddenly. "What is that?"

"I heard nothing," said Charteris.

"There it is again! It is the same cry I heard by the way!"

"I hear it now! But it comes from above, in the building where the monks are."

"You," said Ewles, tightening his belt, and loosening his revolver in its pocket, "you go on, I am going to search for the owner of that voice."

He was gone before they could expostulate with him, Lung-How paddling quickly after his master.

Charteris then massed his men and dived with them into the dark abyss.

So dark was it that they had each one to feel with their hands the right side of the rocky passage; one of the interpreters acting as guide.

In this fashion they went on for at least a quarter of a mile, when a dim light was visible about two hundred yards ahead.

"Not a whisper," scarcely breathed Charteris.

They could hear voices now in murmuring conversation.

The light was caused by a door at the end of the passage being about six inches ajar.

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Charteris crept up to it, and cautiously looked into a sort of rock-hewn room, or cave, round an immense block of black stone in the centre of which were grouped a party of six men.

It was a tall figure, clad in Chinese garments, and standing full in the circle of light made by a hanging lamp of intense power, suspended by metal chains from the roof of the cave, that principally attracted the attention of Charteris. The features, he fancied, appeared to be more western than eastern of type, Yet, what could a European, or civilised white, be doing among these Chinese fiends?

It was a riddle not long in the reading.

With an imperious gesture of his right hand, the man began a rapid, semi-angry speech. He spoke in colloquial Chinese, which Charteris understood, but which, for the benefit of the many is translated as follows:—

"This, mind!" he said, "is my last contribution to your cause, unless you carry out the scheme of total extirpation of the official British and their following. The Tient-Tsin business of last year must not be repeated; it must now be death, and nothing short of death, for every member of the British Legation.

"My money it was—to the tune of more than three million dollars—that was wasted upon a failure, remember! but this million, which is now to do the work then left undone, must not go the same way!—mark that! Every dollar of it must fulfil its mission. Now, Yung-Su, what are your plans?"

Yung-Su, a villainous-looking Chinaman of dwarf-like stature, but with arms so disproportionately long that the hands reached the ground almost, climbed up, lightning quick, on to the stone top, bringing his fiendish face close to the last speaker's.

"Death! Within five days from now every Englishman in China will be a corpse! I swear it! We all swear it! Speak, Li-Tsee! Hung-Wung! Ah-Sheng! Tell the American excellency!—the Gold King!—blood!—blood!—blood! will flow before the next moon shall be born."

"Good!" said the tall Chinaman with the Yankee twang. "I am satisfied."

It is doubtful whether Charteris would have precipitated matters, and forced the citadel so soon, but for an altogether unexpected development.

The last words were scarce out of the leading conspirator's mouth, when, from a hole in the rock, Ewles, bearing in his arms an inanimate female form, burst in upon the assembled six.

Charteris, seeing that the crucial moment had arrived, gave the signal, and, with his men, flung open the door, and called upon the conspirators to surrender.

"Siever Crafte!" cried Ewles, seeing that his companions were in a position to support him. "You have reached the end of your tether! I know your villainy to its lowest depths. You must answer to me now for years of torture and nameless misery."

"Answer!—to you!" cried Crafte, flinging off all disguise, "Do you think I have thrown the die to lose the game? Loose the girl!"

His attention to Ewles had thrown him off his guard; for Charteris, creeping up behind him, threw himself upon him, and dragged him backward to the ground.

Meanwhile the other Europeans had overpowered the five Boxers, who, cowards ever, showed no fight.

Charteris, an old athlete, held on with a grip of steel. The end, however, might have been worse than the beginning.

"Siever Crafte! Will you answer me one question?" said Ewles.

"No!"

With the word, he wrenched himself free of Charteris, and drawing a long Malay kreese from his bosom, sought to plunge it into his enemy's heart.

Ewles, as if intuitively prepared for this, fired at Crafte, who, throwing up his arms, fell, face backwards, across the stone slab.

* * * * *

At the English consul's, at Tient-Tsin, Haidée told her lover how that she, for his sake, had followed Crafte from London. At Shanghai she heard, quite by accident, of his dealings with the Boxers.

It was while travelling the open country between Tient-Tsin and the neighbourhood of the Ming Tombs that Crafte had kidnapped her, taking her by litter to the Temple of Tsing-Tsoo, where his influence with the Buddhist priests there enabled him to get her immured in one of the lamasary cells.

These cells communicated by an underground passage with the cave where the conspirators met.

Crafte evidently hoped to persuade Haidée to his will, and it was only the timely intervention of the Legation people which prevented it.

What advantage he hoped to reap by financing the Boxers, is, or was, best known to himself. His death destroyed the hopes of his friends, for, as it transpired, the promised million had not been actually paid over to the confederacy.

* * * * *

At a quiet little house on the borders of Wimbledon Common, Septimus Ewles and his wife lead an ideal existence.

By common consent they never refer to those events which, though they brought them together, were fraught with peril and misery unspeakable.

Septimus Ewles is working up a nice little practice in and around Putney and Roehampton, but the flesh-pots of Egypt have no reminiscent attraction for him; he lives for his love, for his revenge is satisfied.

* * * * *

Concluding note by Dr. Ewles.

"My friend, Inspector Ryan, has lately discovered that the woman who accompanied Crafte from Charing Cross Station, and who was so strangely like my Haidée, proceeded no further than Calais with her companion. She has herself, only a day or two ago, just before she succumbed to heart-failure, in a ward of St. Andrew's Hospital, confessed to Collings and Ryan that Siever Crafte engaged her from a London theatre to leave England with him in order to create an impression that it was Haidée. Crafte saw Ryan at the station, and took every means to make the situation as public as possible."

RALPH ENDERBY.

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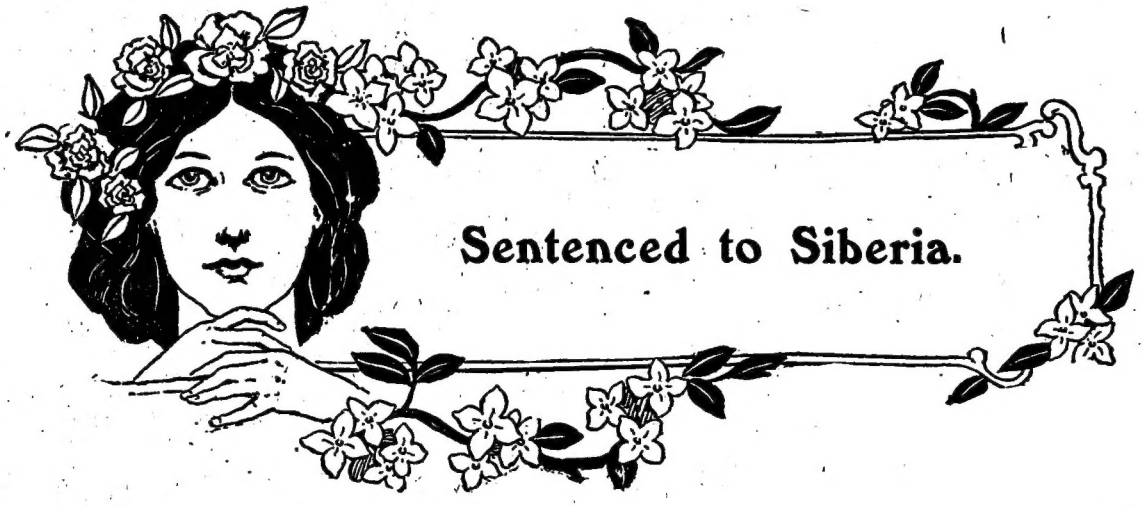

Sentenced to Siberia.

"Siberia? I have had five-and-twenty years in Siberia."

So said my fellow passenger. We were on board a Petersburg and Hull steamer; we were passing down the gulf of Finland, and the low fortifications of Cronstadt were growing more and more indistinct in the distance. We were sitting on deck he and I, each with the fraternal pipe in his mouth, and were getting through the preliminary stages of acquaintanceship-making. Passengers are few and far between on these liners, and one has to make the most one may of such as the gods think well to send. Plainly this smoking companion of mine did not spring from the educated classes. His was not a refined face; though, so far as the pit-marks, with which it was liberally tattooed, would permit one to see, it was an intelligent, and not an unkindly one. He was unusually big and strongly-built, and though in the downhill of life would still have been an ugly opponent in a tussle. His dress, and personal appearance generally, indicated the well-to-do man. Even to those who know something of Western Russia, "Siberia" has an awful and mysterious sound, and the experiences of one who had spent a quarter of a century in the Czar's great prison-house, must be worth the hearing. I proposed to myself to cultivate my big acquaintance.

Had he, I asked, seen anything of convict life? He was of opinion that a man could not well live where he had lived without seeing something of it. Was that life as dreadful as English novel-writers represented it, and as English people generally supposed it to be? My fellow passenger was no reader of novels, and had been too long from home to know what English people generally thought; but he could tell me a thing or two that had come under his own notice, and I might judge for myself.

Nothing, I assured him, would give me greater pleasure than to listen.

"I am a Lancashire man," said my big friend, "and I rose from the ranks. I began life much as other mill-hands do; but my head was set the right way on my shoulders, and I got to be an overlooker. Five-and-twenty years ago, when a great English firm, whose operations extend over many parts of Russia, started a cotton-mill at Ekaterinburg, I was offered a post as manager. Ekaterinburg is, as I dare say you know, on the Siberian side of the Ural mountains, and in the heart of the Government mining districts. A man thinks twice before he transports himself and his family to such a place, but I had made up my mind to get on, and this was a good chance for one in my position.

"I was not disappointed. I looked well after the mill, and it prospered. We north country operatives are a thrifty folk, and like living in a plain way. I saved money, and as it was the policy of our firm to keep me in my post, and to give me a personal interest in the undertaking, I was allowed to invest my few hundreds of roubles in the mill.

"These common-place particulars about my own affairs can have very little interest for you, sir. I only tell them because otherwise you would scarcely understand what has to follow.

"One evening, late in our short Russian summer, when the long days were fast drawing in, we were in our family sitting-room, I engaged with some of the mill accounts, and my wife with her sewing, when Lottie, our eldest daughter, rushed in, and, without a word, fainted right away on the floor.

"This did not more frighten my wife and myself than it surprised us, for Lottie was a sensible girl, and had never given way to any hysterical fancies before. We knew that it must have taken a good deal to upset her in that way, and as soon as we had contrived to bring her round, we made her tell us what had been the matter.

"It seemed that she had been alone in her room, when, turning suddenly towards the window, she became aware of a face pressed closely against the glass and glaring at her. What the face was like she was unable to describe, but it had appeared too ugly and horrible for a human being. If it could have been called that of a man or woman, she said, she should not have been so frightened.

"I went out and looked round the house. Nothing

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was to be seen. We knew Lottie to be a sensible girl, but we were inclined to think that her fancy must have played her a trick for once.

"After a time my wife left the room to see about our supper. My wife (she has been dead now this nine years) had as strong nerves as any woman that I ever knew—nothing ever seemed to knock her off her balance. Well, she came back in a minute or two, and beckoned me to the door. She was calm enough, but I could see by her face that something was wrong. She would not say what she had to say before the girl for fear of frightening her again. So she whispered to me outside. 'Lottie must have been right, there *is* something about. When I opened the door of the *kladovoy*' (the larder, that is) 'I heard something at the window. Whatever it may have been it took the alarm, and did not let me see it; but it has left its marks on the lattice.'

"I followed her silently to the *kladovoy*. All was now quiet there. I examined the *fortochka*—as in Russia we call the little window of such a place. In summer-time its glass casement was removed, and it was now only protected by a lattice of crossed strips of fir-wood. These strips were slightly displaced, as if someone had tried to force them out, and thus to gain entrance. The *fortochka* was about large enough to have admitted the body of a man.

"Nothing was to be seen by looking out; for though a reasonable amount of twilight still remained, it was only enough to show things with any distinctness in the open, and I had sheltered the back of our house by planting a number of young fir trees. I whispered to my wife that she should go back to Lottie, and that I would stay where I was for a bit, and see whether the robber—if it were a robber—would come again.

"It was scarcely to be called late, yet it was too late for any of our mill people to be about, and they were our only neighbours. Indeed, we had no near neighbours. My house, and one adjoining it (intended for another *employé*, but at that time unoccupied), stood partly within the high wooden fence which inclosed the mill; that is, their backs opened into the inclosure (the *dvor*, as we call it), whilst their fronts looked on a public thoroughfare. Thus our back premises were strictly private after the gates to the mill had been closed, and the person—if it was a person—who had got to the windows must either have secreted himself within the *dvor*, or have gained access to it in some improper manner. Now, however, all was still as could be.

"Down I sat to watch, close by the door of the *kladovoy*. I chose a dark corner, and one where, in the dusk, it would have been a hard matter to see me, but I had a full view of the lattice. I waited until my patience was beginning to wear out, and then fancied that I heard some slight sound outside under the *fortochka*. It was so slight that at first I was not sure whether it might not be merely fancy, but after a little pause I heard it again, louder, and more distinctly. I sat still as a mouse, and kept a sharp look out.

"Slowly and gradually something raised itself before the opening. It was a head; but in the uncertain light I could not say whether it was a human head, or that of some brute creature. Whichever it might be, I could see enough of it to know that it was such a wild, haggard, unearthly-looking thing as I had never looked upon before. Any quantity of shaggy hair was hanging about it, and its only features to speak of seemed to be eyes. Eyes it had past all mistake. Never did I see anything like the way in which it glared at our good provisions within. I have seen what a famished wolf looks like, and should hardly think a famished wolf worth comparing with that creature. It was ravenous after what it saw. Up beside the head came two bunches of long claws, which wrenched at the wooden lattice as if to tear it down. But they were too weak. The strips held fast. And then the thing fell to with its teeth to gnaw a way through.

"Whilst the creature was thus engaged, I contrived to slip quietly from my dark corner by the door, and catching up a big stick, went out at the back of the house. I stole round as noiselessly as I could towards the window. There were, as I said, young fir trees on that side of the house, so that with a little care it was not difficult to approach the place unobserved. When I got to within a few yards, I saw that the man—for the creature was a man—was still hard at work, trying to force a way in.

"I dropped my stick and made a rush at him, and had him before he knew anything about it. He did not give up quietly. He struggled hard—desperately, I may say. But, bless you, he'd not the ghost of a chance with me. I am a tolerably strong man still, as men go, and I was younger then; I could have undertaken three such as he, and thought nothing of it. The poor wretch had no sort of condition about him—he was mere skin and bones—no muscle at all. He was nothing but a walking anatomy, with a few rags by way of covering—and only a very few.

"All that he gained by his struggles was a good shaking, for I gave him one that made every tooth in his head chatter, and then I laid him flat on his back.

"I had been long enough in the country to gain some knowledge of Russ. I could use it pretty freely to our mill people; and I must own that for terms in which to blackguard a set of lazy rascals, as most of those fellows are, Billingsgate isn't a patch on it. So I could make my prisoner understand me. 'Now then, my friend,' I said to him, 'you needn't take the trouble to show any more fight. You see it won't pay. So just get up and march quietly off with me to the *ouchastock*'—the *ouchastock* being, as you perhaps know, equivalent to the police-station in English.

"But instead of getting up and doing as he was told, like a reasonable being, the creature contrived to wriggle itself upon its knees, and to hold up its hands, while it begged of me in the name of the virgin and all the saints not to hand it over to the *politzia*. It would rather be killed outright, and was ready to be beaten as much as I pleased.

"'My ragged friend,' I said, 'you are queer chap! Why do you object to the police so strongly?'

"The poor wretch made no direct answer, but only reiterated his intreaties that I would not give him up. I began to have some suspicion of the quality of my guest. 'I am inclined to think,' I said, 'that you are neither more nor less than an escaped convict.'

"Instead of attempting to deny it, he only begged me to pity him, as before.

"Russian law is terribly hard on those who in any way assist in or conceal the escape of a convict. Of that I was aware. But though I am a big fellow to look at, and in some things can hold my own as well as any man, I have always been a poor, soft-hearted fool in others. I was beginning to feel downright sorry for that poor creature—it was not so much his prayers that fetched me, as his looks. 'Well,' I said, 'suppose I don't give you up, but let you go. What then?'

"He would always remember me with gratitude. He would go on his way at once, and do no harm to my property. He was no thief. He had only entered

this *dvor*—this yard, to hide himself, but that the sight of food had overcome him; he was famishing, but he dared not beg. He had walked, how far he could not tell, perhaps a thousand versts, and all the way he had not dared to ask for food, scarcely to speak to a living soul. He was trying to reach his own village, perhaps a thousand versts farther. If I would only set him free he would go on at once.

"That was about the substance of the fellow's answer. His appearance seemed to bear out his statements, and I was inclined to believe him. 'It's sheer nonsense,' I said, 'for you to talk of setting off for a walk of a thousand versts, if I let you go. You might as well talk of flying. You have not the strength to walk ten. You would only fall by the roadside, you miserable scarecrow, and die in a ditch. I should be doing the kinder thing by you if I handed you over to the authorities. If I do let you go, I must give you something to eat first. Come with me.'

"The miserable wretch hardly believed that I really meant to feed him, and would have run away had he dared. I took him into the empty house, of which I had the key, and fetched him as much food as I thought it safe for him to eat.

"So there I was, with an escaped convict on my hands. Had I been more prudent I should have reflected that the fellow was most likely a hardened scoundrel, quite undeserving of pity, and that his gratitude would probably be shown either by robbing me, or, if he should happen to fall into the hands of the police, by getting me into trouble to save his own worthless neck. I ought to have thought of these things; but, as I said before, I am a soft-hearted, old fool, and neglected to do so.

"I kept him in that empty house for several days; in fact, till he had so far recovered his strength as to be fit to go on. Nobody knew about him, not even the members of my own family, for if I was doing a foolish thing, I had sense enough to run as little risk over it as possible. Feodor Stepanovitch, for that my convict told me was his name, enlightened me on some few points of his personal history. His native village was, he said, in the government of Vladimir, and he had left it to get work in the town of Ivanova, where there are factories. Every man tries to make out a good case for himself, so I did not feel myself bound to place implicit reliance on Feodor's statement that he had never committed anything that could properly be called a crime. According to his showing, the sole source of his troubles had been a difference with an *ouvadnik*—a police agent. I do not exactly remember the particulars, but, of course, there was a woman in the business; blows had passed, and the *ouvadnik* had, by a false charge, procured Feodor's condemnation to Siberia for life. This, I say, was *his* story.

"Feodor told me that his place of exile had been somewhere far up the country; and of the severities he had had to endure, and of the tyranny of officials, he spoke bitterly. After making his escape the privations and dangers he had undergone before reaching Ekaterinburg, were such as I should not have believed from his words, had they not been verified by his appearance.

"For a Russian he appeared to me to be a not unintelligent fellow, and I pointed out to him the difficulties he would find in making his way to Ivanova—a distance of not less than twelve hundred versts from Ekaterinburg, as the crow flies, and advised him, as he was used to mill work, to stay and find employment where he was. I was weak enough to offer to help him, and see what could be done in the way of getting a passport for him. But the fellow was bent on going forward. He was resolved, he said, to see his family again, and he was resolved to see Basil Makaroff. This Makaroff was, I found, the *ouvadnik* to whom Feodor attributed his troubles, and it seemed to me that this particular hankering to see this person meant a craving to have his revenge. I confess that when I heard this much, I felt no desire to detain my friend Feodor longer than was necessary. I was glad to give him something more decent in the way of clothing than he had brought, and a trifle in money to help him on his way, and to be rid of him.

"I never expected to see him again, nor wished to do so; and I was somewhat startled when, a few weeks later, among a gang of convicts which were being marched by a guard of soldiers out of the town on their way eastward, I recognised Stepanovitch. I was standing close by when he passed, and was so much surprised to see him, that I somewhat imprudently, perhaps, spoke to him by name. But, will you believe it?—the ungrateful dog stared me in the face, and marched sullenly by without word or sign of recognition. 'So much,' thought I, 'for gratitude!'

"Some months later, when the next summer was getting well advanced, we had one night an alarm of fire. Many of the newer mills at Ekaterinburg are of stone, but the main building of ours, being comparatively old, was of wood. It was a thing to blaze up like a box of matches. It was not, however, in the main building that the fire had broken out, but in some sheds connected with the main building by a range of outbuildings. This last was stone-built, but as ill-luck would have it, covered with wooden shingles.

"A good many people were soon together, mostly our own hands, and I directed and encouraged them as well as I could to get the fire under. But they are a stolid, heavy set of fellows, those Russians, and the way in which they take care not to over-exert themselves at a fire is enough to drive an Englishman wild. Yet there some few who worked well, and one fellow in particular, I noticed, a ragged fellow, a beggar I took him to be, who really worked splendidly, and in a way that ought to have made many of those whose daily bread depended on the existence of the mill, ashamed of themselves.

"What between the apathy of those lazy scoundrels generally, and want of water, it was soon plain that the sheds which were on fire could not be saved, and that what we had to look to was the mill itself. The danger of the main building was increasing every moment, for the fire was beginning to make its way along the shingled roof of which I spoke.

"I could see what had to be done—those shingles had to be stripped off. I had a ladder reared against the building, and called for volunteers to mount it. The height of that roof from the ground was considerable, and the fire was every moment getting more and more hold upon it. To strip off the shingles would be a hard job, and a hot one, and it is not to be denied, a dangerous one. Not one of those cold-blooded rascals who had eaten our bread for years would come forward. I stood at the foot of the ladder, and told them I was going up myself. I offered twenty roubles—fifty roubles—to any man who would help me. But it was of no use.

"Just when I was about to mount alone, the ragged stranger fellow, whom I had before observed working so vigorously, came running up. He had been too busy in another place to know what was going forward

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sooner. That was scarcely a time for taking any particular notice of people's looks, yet I had an impression that he was not altogether a stranger to me.

"He looked up to the roof. The delay of those few minutes had given a fearful advantage to the fire. 'There is death up there,' he said, 'Is saving this mill so *very* important to you.'

"'If it is burnt I am a beggar. Every *kopeck* I am worth is in it. A hundred roubles if you will help me to save it!'

"'We can talk of the reward afterwards,' he said, as he sprang past me, and up the ladder like a cat.

"I was following, too eagerly, perhaps, to be careful, and I am a heavy man. A round broke, and down I came, with a knee so much twisted that I could scarcely stand. It was no longer in my power to climb to the roof.

"But from where I propped myself up against a wall, I could see that ragged fellow, who was up and doing enough for three or four ordinary men. You should have seen how he sent the shingles rattling down. Seen from below he seemed at times to be working with fire all round him, but he went on without minding it. I never saw an Englishman—let alone a Russian—go to it with a better will. I heard the people round me say that that he worked more like a fiend than a mortal man—and so he did. He handled the burning wood as though his fingers had been iron instead of flesh and blood, and scarcely seemed to shrink from the flames that blazed up round his face. He never appeared to rest or stay for breath till he had succeeded in cutting off the communication between the fire and the mill.

"I made the men below set the ladder as handily as they could for him to get down, and he did his best to reach it. But he must have been quite used up, besides being pretty much blinded and suffocated with the smoke. Anyway, he lost his footing and down he went through the rafters, and crashed among the burning rubbish below. It was an ugly fall.

"We got him out as well as we could, and such a scorched, smoke-blackened, smashed-up copy of God's image I should never wish to see again. But he was still alive, and to the proposal to carry him straight to the hospital I said; 'No; take him into my house.' So they took him in.

"After we had got the fire quite under, and made all safe about the mill, I limped to the side of the bed where they had laid the poor fellow. He had come round a bit by that time. He tried to open his eyes, but it seemed to me that the fire and smoke had not left him much power of seeing with them. He spoke, however, more distinctly than might have been expected, and his first question was whether the mill was safe.

"I told him that owing to his pluck it was. I was surprised to find that he recognised my voice, and still more when he heard my name. 'You do not know me,' he said, and, indeed, it was not likely that anyone should know such a crushed and shapeless mass of cinder as he was—'You do not know me—Feodor Setpanovitch. They caught me, and took me back. I knew you when you spoke to me in the street, but I dared not answer lest they should suspect you of having befriended me. I have escaped from them again, and am going home to Ivanova. I must see my wife, and that villain Makaroff.'

"He lay a little, and then added, 'I am glad I was here to help you to-night. I am glad they did not take me again before I got here. I do not think the *politzia* will take me again.'

"And they did not, for he was dead within an hour of that time.

"That, sir, is the end of my story of a Siberiak. Do you happen to have a light handy? for, somehow, I have let my pipe out. And, bless me, my pipe-bowl is quite wet. I believe I'm crying. What an old ass I am!"

E. T. W.

Vanden Bussche's Ride.

MANY fat people assert that they have small appetites, but I am sure that my good friend, Mons. Vanden Bussche, has an enormous one, is extremely fond of eating and possesses an excellent digestion. As a boy he a acquired the nickname of the "gargantua," and he always appreciated an invitation to dine out.

Several years ago, Monsieur Vanden Bussche's wife fell heir, through the demise of the Baron Snoy, her father, to considerable property in the neighbourhood of Antwerp. This made it necessary for Vanden Bussche to leave the English city where he was then living, and betake himself to the land of his birth. A certain acquaintance of his, named Whitelaw, a tall, gaunt Scotchman, having business in the same part of the world, they determined to travel together. In the course of the trip they found themselves one dark, rainy day, in sleepy, time-stained, mud-coloured, out-of-date, Mechlin, in an ancient inn with sanded floors, candles, feather beds, and stolid Flemish servants, who looked so stupid, that Whitelaw declared that he didn't feel sure whether he ought to address them in front or back.

At the moment of which I write, Vanden Bussche was alone in his room, on the second floor of the hostelry. He held in his hand an open letter, and a broad grin illumined his jolly countenance as he read. Before he had quite finished, Whitelaw came in. Vanden Bussche instantly tossed aside the letter, and falling on the neck of the astonished Scotsman, whirled him round, shouting in his ear:

"Good! Excellent! Superb news, my friend!"

"Oh, get off my neck, man, and tell me what ails you in plain English," answered Whitelaw, shaking himself loose.

"Well, zen, my dear sair, I haf a lettaire from my friend Zeger inviting us both to dine with heem to-night."

"Bless your soul, man, is that all?"

"All! But I forgif you—you come from Scotland, where they bring you up on oatmeal and finnan—what you call dem?—hatties. Wait, my dear sair, till you

eat a dinnair Belgique!" And he kissed the tips of his fat fingers and raised his eyes ecstatically to the ceiling.

"We'd best be preparing, then. At what time does you friend dine?"

"At sex."

"Dress suits?"

"Certainement."

"They'll have to be pressed. I'll call the garsong."

He rang the bell, and then both men dived into their trunks and brought forth "swallow-tails" and trousers.

"Parbleu!" exclaimed Vanden Bussche promptly, "ze eau de Cologne has itself spilt over everysing in my carpet bag."

"Let's see," said Whitelaw, stepping over. "Good gracious, man, what will you do? You can't go smelling like a perfumery shop."

"No," answered Vanden Bussche, dolefully, but even as he said it his face brightened. "Oh, zat makes nosing. I send heem to ze tailor and he ze smell will take out like zis!" and he snapped his fat fingers gaily and hurried to the door to admit the boy who had just knocked, gave him the necessary instructions about the garments, and told him to order a carriage for them at 5.30.

It took what seemed to Vanden Bussche an interminable time to make those dress suits presentable, although he had beguiled the interval by composing a toast. Speech-making was a well-known weakness of his. He had rendered his present production with great unction several times for the benefit of Whitelaw, and was beginning for the fourth time, when that abused individual begged him to desist, whereupon he took to pacing the floor excitedly, muttering to himself.

"Zat is always my luck, when zaire is a fine dinnaire somesing mus' happen to my clothes. Confound it! Why haf Zepherine gif me zat bottle of Cologne? I'll not go, zat's all zere is about it!" Then in a pathetically dismal tone, "I'll stay here and eat ze table d'hote."

"Upon my word, I'll dine elsewhere if you contemplate any such trick as that, Vanden Bussche." This from Whitelaw.

Taking no notion of the interruption, Vanden Bussche continued impatiently: "Zese tailors, zey do it on purpose, so zat they can charge a big price! A whole hour to take ze Cologne out of ze clothes! It is one outrage!"

Scarcely were these words uttered than a loud rapping announced the arrival of the garments, which in a jiffy were donned, and the two travellers hurried down to the carriage.

"Climb upon your seat, man; we are in a hurry," commanded Vanden Bussche, speaking to the driver.

Whitelaw entered the carriage, while Vanden Bussche gave the man the address, and promised extra fare if he got them to their destination by six o'clock; then he sprang into the vehicle, and slammed the door after him. Horrors! Crash! Crack! Bang! As the weighty Vanden Bussche stepped in, the bottom of the coach fell out, precipitating himself and Whitelaw on to the cobble-stones.

"*Arretez! Arretez!*" howled the Belgian, recovering his feet as quickly as possible.

"Help! Stop the horses!" bawled Whitelaw. But the horses did not stop, and no help came. On the contrary, they seemed to go faster than ever. And passers-by, had there been any, could have seen a pair of short, fat legs, and a pair of long thin one going at double-quick time under the coach.

"Ooooh!" groaned Whitelaw. "My legs! I knock hem against those confounded axles with every move."

"Take shorter steps," suggested Vanden Busschee "That is nosing to what haf happen to me. I has forgot—my—speech!" he panted.

"Confound your speech!" muttered his companion in misery. "You don't expect to eat that dinner, do you?"

"Oh! if we keep running like zis we will get zare," answered Vanden Bussche amiably.

"Which I don't propose to do. Hello, there! Cocher! Cocher! Cocher!" shouted the Scotchman, and with each exclamation he banged more forcibly on the front of the carriage. Still onward they went, faster and faster than ever, and anon they could hear the driver cracking his whip noisily, and urging his galloping steeds to still greater exertions.

"A pretty looking sight we'll be when we do get there," the Scotchman managed to gasp.

"Oh, Zeger will pardon us; he is very amiable," consoled Vanden Bussche breathlessly.

"How—far—does—the—wretched—man—live—anyway?"

"Oh! about zree miles, I zink."

Whitelaw groaned.

Vanden Bussche made an effort to feel in the pocket of his coat tail, and nearly fell

"Hold on, man!" cried his friend, grabbing him "Don't mind your handkerchief now. Blow your nose—anywhere."

"It's not my handkerchief; it's my speech," was the reply.

"For the love of Heaven, Van, don't mention that speech again! I'll kill you if you do, on my honour!"

"But I'm afraid I haf forgotten to remember eet," grumbled Vanden Bussche.

Hardly had he uttered these words than the carriage stopped with a jerk, and the two sprinters within suddenly and forcibly sat down in the mud.

"We are zere!" exclaimed Vanden Bussche.

"The dickens we are!" growled Whitelaw, as he angrily scrambled to his feet and burst open the door of the coach, bent upon wiping up the earth with the offending cabby.

"Oh, let heem alone; we will be late to ze dinner," entreated Vanden Bussche, dragging Whitelaw away. Then, so the man, "Begone, or I'll hand you over to the police!"

The two friends turned and saw before them the white front of a pretty country house. Whitelaw noticed that not a single light was visible, and Vanden Bussche looked puzzled. Nevertheless they both approached the door, and the Belgian rang the bell. After some minutes it was opened by a man with a lighted candle in his hand. Vanden Bussche asked for Monsieur Zeger.

"Monsieur Zeger," answered the man has a town house. He gives a dinner this evening to a gentleman from England."

"I am he," remarked Vanden Bussche. "I was not aware that Monsieur Zeger had a town house."

"He had not until recently," answered the man. "I am going there now with some wine, and can take Messieurs if they desire it."

Vanden Bussche accepted at once, notwithstanding the remonstrances of his friend. On arriving, the valet soon made them presentable, and though late for the first course, they enjoyed the remainder of the feast. Vanden Bussche, instead of his speech, gave an amusing account of their mad race inside the floorless carriage.

C. DOCHEZ.

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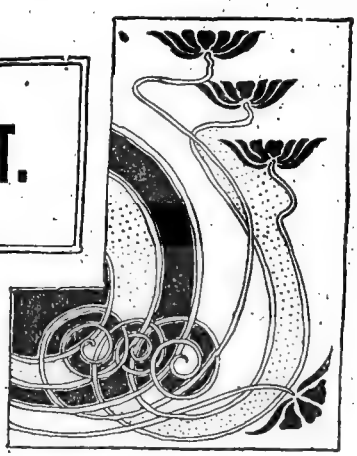
HIS DEATH-WARRANT.



A Story of a Newspaper Reporter

"It was in the north some years ago," remarked the city editor. "We had a man on the paper who was simply a crank on homicides, and he was more than a mere reporter, for he had detective talent of the highest order. He didn't care much for the common crimes—burglaries, larcenies, and such—but give him a good, mysterious murder and he was splendid. Not only did he have the history of all the famous murderers at his fingers' ends, but he delighted in ferreting out the most mysterious crimes that came within our province. In every case except the one I am telling about—and there were a good many crimes in that town—he traced out the murderer before the detectives even dreamt of his identity.

"I have since thought the secret of his success was that he put himself mentally in the place of the murderer and reasoned it out from motives rather than from the clues of the ordinary detective.

"'There is seldom much method in murder,' he once said to me when in a rarely communicative mood. "'Most men would commit it in about the same way under the same circumstances. It is only when a murderer goes about it systematically, as do the Thugs of India, that a murder becomes truly mysterious.'

"I once asked him why he did not become a regular detective.

"'I was born and bred a journalist,' he said, 'and the habit is too strong to break.'

"That was literally true in his case. Otherwise I might not have to tell this story.

"One morning the body of a fine looking man was found in an alley adjoining the electric light works in the very heart of the town. The afternoon papers had a chance at it, but didn't make much out of it, so I at once assigned it to Jones, as we will call him. Although he did not show up at the usual hour, I had no doubt he was already at work on it, as it was as mysterious a case as even he could desire.

"The victim was identified as a traveller who had just arrived, and so far as was known he had no friends or acquaintances in the town. It was not a case of robbery, for all his money and valuables were left on his body. There was a slight contusion on the back of the head and a small, needle-like hole through the man's heart. It was especially strange that such a crime could have been committed in a public thoroughfare while there was absolutely no clue to the murderer or his motive.

"But these difficulties were only such as would ordinarily put Jones on his mettle, so I did not doubt that he would have a good account of the affair. I was therefore somewhat surprised when he came sneaking in about six o'clock in the evening to see what his assignment was. He looked worn and haggard, but denied that he was ill, so I gave him the murder job. He went out without a word.

"I did not see him again that evening. About midnight I began to wonder why I had not heard from him, but only speculated on the possibility of something having happened to him, for the idea that he could possibly fail never occurred to me. Finally, after an hour had gone by, I telephoned to the police station. Word came back that there were no new developments in the case, and that Jones had not been there. Sending two men out to hunt him up, I set to work myself to make a story of the murder from the afternoon papers. Just then Jones came in. His step was unsteady and his face flushed. He had evidently been drinking heavily, something I never knew him to do before, but he was not drunk; rather he seemed at high nervous tension, although outwardly as calm as ever.

"I decided to let this breach of discipline pass, and merely asked him for his murder story. He replied that he hadn't written it.

"'Well, get to work on it at once,' I said rather sharply.

"Then he really surprised me by saying that he had nothing to write beyond the bare facts already known. The police had developed nothing new, and he supposed that I had worked up the story from the evening papers.

"'And has it come to pass that you wait for the police to develop a murder case for you?' I exclaimed angrily. 'As for the reports in the evening papers, you can "fake" a better story than they had.'

"He sat down in apparent despair at his desk. Then I relented and cajoled him a little, begging him not to spoil his great record by failing in such a case.

"'There's a starter for you,' said I, throwing him the article I had commenced. 'Now go ahead and fill that out with a column description of the scene.'

"'I haven't even visited it,' he replied. Nevertheless he picked up the pages and read them, as if impelled by some hateful fascination. Then he took up his pen to make a few minor corrections. Then, as if totally oblivious of my presence, he began to write.

"As sheet after sheet fell from under his fingers I snatched them up, read them hurriedly, and shot them up to the composing-room. I read rapidly, taking but small account of the matter so long as it ran smoothly, while I had too much confidence in him to question the accuracy of his statements. I only realised that he was writing a great account—the greatest he had ever written. He seemed inspired with the very innermost thoughts of the murder, and under his touch every trivial incident came out with distinctness and coherence that made the cause and method of the crime perfectly plain.

"First he described the scene with accuracy and detail that would have been impossible for one who had not studied it closely. The selection of the spot was explained by the fact that the bright electric light streaming through the windows of the engine-house made it impossible for the passer-by to see into the shadows. Thus, while impenetrable darkness screened the assassin, the rattle and roar of the machinery near by drowned all sounds of the struggle and of the falling body.

"The blow on the head, he demonstrated, must have been from a stick, while the wound through the heart could only have been made by one of those long, fine-bladed stilettos of Italian make. Furthermore, the fact that this peculiar weapon was driven home with a firm hand after the victim had been stunned by a blow on the head, indicated premeditated and deliberate murder, while the theory of robbery was disproved by the fact that the man's valuables had been untouched. The only reliable theory, therefore, was that the motive of the murderer was revenge.

"A more masterly analysis of a case I never read, but here he branched off into what I at first supposed to be purely imaginary speculations as to the wrong which had led the murderer to seek the life of the unknown man. These seemed purposely vague at first, but gathered in strength and certainty until I concluded that he must have some good foundation for them. Starting with hypothesis, he soon began to state them as facts. He described how the dead man, a once trusted friend, had entered the home of another, how by subtle wiles and deceit he had stolen the love of his wife; then followed an elopement and the breaking up of that once happy home.

"He told with the bitterness of truth how the scoundrel had deserted the erring woman and left her to perish alone; how the idea of revenge had filled the mind of the wronged husband; how, himself unseen, he had followed every movement of the intended victim for months and carefully plotted his destruction; how he had decoyed the doomed man to the town, and to the very spot where the murder was committed, and how he had destroyed the only clues—a couple of letters in the pockets of the dead man—and finally made his own escape, the secret safe in his own heart alone.

"As I read this remarkable tale through the conviction forced itself upon me that this was the absolute truth. If the writer himself had committed the deed, he could not have described it more graphically. Suddenly the thought flashed over me—Could he describe such a crime thus without having in fact committed it?'

"We were alone in the room. I glanced at Jones apprehensively. He was writing rapidly, fiercely. His eyes were fixed, but he seemed to be looking through and beyond the paper across which his pen flew at something fascinating, terrible. When he finished, it was with a start, as if waking from a trance. I glanced at the last page, where was final confirmation of my fears.

"'Good Heavens, Jones, is this true?' I managed to say.

"'Every word of it, as I live,' he replied firmly, if faintly.

"'Then you have written the warrant for your own arrest,' I said.

"His head dropped on his desk, but he said not a word.

"'Jones,' said I, finally shaking him by the shoulder to arouse him to an understanding of my meaning, 'enough to hang you is in type. In an hour the papers will be on the streets. In another hour the police will be after you. Go; make the most of your start.'

"It was as I predicted," said the city editor after a pause. "Before daylight a detective called on me to ascertain the source of that story. I simply pointed to Jones' name on the book, and they went after him."

"Did they catch him?" asked the other eagerly.

"They found him in his room with a stiletto through his heart."

S. L. S.

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THE LOVERS OF YVONNE

By RAFAEL SABATINI.

SUMMARY.

ANDREA DE MANCINI, a nephew of Cardinal Mazarin, is found one day by the latter in the Palais Royal, Paris, in a state of intoxication. Gaston de Luynes, the narrator of this story, and fencing-master to de Mancini, is blamed by the Cardinal for allowing his nephew to get into such a condition, and is removed from his position of fencing-master.

Eugène de Canaples insults de Mancini and a duel is arranged, but the Cardinal hears of it and tells de Luynes that it must not take place. De Luynes realises that if he does not prevent it the Cardinal has power to do him great harm, and accordingly raises a quarrel with de Canaples which ends in a fight, de Canaples being severely wounded. The onlookers are enraged with de Luynes because he indiscreetly lets fall the fact that he raised this quarrel so as to prevent a duel between de Mancini and de Canaples, and he has to flee for his life. To escape his pursuers he springs on the step of a passing carriage, and the ladies inside let him shelter there for a time, but when he says that he has wounded de Canaples they order him to alight.

De Luynes then accompanies de Mancini to the home of Eugène de Canaples, whose sister, Yvonne, Cardinal Mazarin wishes de Mancini to marry. The Chevalier de Canaples receives de Luynes and de Mancini very cordially at his château. Yvonne, however, is not at all gracious to de Luynes, because she knows of the duel which he fought with her brother, as she and her sister Geneviève were the two ladies who befriended him. De Mancini falls in love with Geneviève.

De Luynes does not stay at the Château de Canaples, but at an inn in Blois, the *Lys de France*. One morning he is visited there by the Marquis de St. Auban, who himself wants to marry Yvonne—for her money. After insulting each other a duel is arranged for the following morning. St. Auban tells de Luynes that Cardinal Mazarin has issued a warrant for his arrest.

CHAPTER X.

THE CONSCIENCE OF MALPERTUIS.

AND so back to my room I went, my task accomplished; and so pleased was I with what had passed that, as I drew on my boots, preparing to set out to Canaples, I laughed softly to myself.

St. Auban I would dispose of in the morning; as for the other members of the cabal, I deemed neither Vilmorin nor Malpertuis sufficiently formidable to inspire uneasiness. St. Auban gone, they, too, would vanish. There remained then Eugène de Canaples. Him, however, methought, no great evil was to be feared from. In Paris he might be as loud-voiced as he pleased, but in his father's château, from what I had learnt, 'twas unlikely he would so much as show himself. Moreover, he was wounded, and before he had sufficiently recovered to offer interference, it was more than probable that Andrea would have married one or the other of Mesdemoiselles de Canaples; I had a shrewd suspicion that it would be the wrong one, and there again I feared trouble.

As I stood up, booted and ready to descend, there came a gentle tap at my door, and in answer to my "enter," there stood before me a very dainty and foppish figure. I stared hard at the effeminate face and the long fair locks of my visitor, thinking that I was to become the dupe of my eyes.

"M. de Vilmorin!" I murmured in astonishment, as he came forward, having closed the door. "You here?"

In answer he bowed, and greeted me with cold ceremoniousness.

"I have been in Blois since yesterday, Monsieur."

"In truth I might have guessed it, Vicomte. Your visit flatters me, for of course I take it you are come to pay me your respects," I said ironically. "A glass of wine, Vicomte?"

"A thousand thanks, Monsieur, no," he answered coldly, in his mincing tones. "It is concerning your affair with M. le Marquis de St. Auban that I am come." And drawing forth a dainty kerchief which filled the room with the scent of ambergris, he tapped his lips with it affectedly.

"Do you come as friend or—in some other capacity?"

"I come as mediator."

"Mediator!" I echoed, and my brow grew dark. "Sdeath. Has St. Auban's courage lasted just so long as the sting of my whip?"

He raised his eyebrows after a supercilious fashion that made me burn to strike the chair from under him.

"You misapprehend me; M. de St. Auban has no desire to avert the duel. On the contrary, he will not rest until the affront you have put upon him be washed out——"

"It will be, I'll answer for it."

"Your answer, sir, is characteristic of a braggart. He who promises most does not always fulfil most."

I stared at him in amazement.

"Shall I promise you something, Vicomte? Good gracious, if you seek to pick a quarrel with me——"

"Heaven forbid!" he ejaculated, turning colour. And his suddenly awakened apprehensions swept aside the affectation that hitherto had marked his speech and manner.

"Then, Monsieur, be brief, and state the sum of this mediation."

"It is this, Monsieur. In the heat of the moment, M. le Marquis gave you, in the hearing of half-a-score of people, an assignation for to-morrow morning. News of the affair will spread rapidly through Blois, and it is likely there will be no lack of spectators on the green to witness the encounter. Therefore, as my friend thinks this will be as unpalatable to you as it is to him, he has sent me to suggest a fresh meeting-place."

"Pooh, sir," I answered lightly, "I care not for myself who comes. I am accustomed to a crowd. Still, since M. de St. Auban finds it discomposing, let us arrange otherwise."

"There is yet another point. M. de St. Auban spoke to you, I believe, of an officer who is coming hither, charged with your arrest. It is probable that he may reach Blois before

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morning, so that the Marquis thinks that to make certain you might consent to meet him to-night."

"St. Auban is indeed in earnest, then! Convey to him my expressions of admiration at this suddenly awakened courage. Be good enough, Vicomte, to name the meeting-place."

"Do you know the chapel of St. Sulpice des Reaux?"

"What, beyond the Loire?"

"Precisely, Monsieur. About a league from Chambord, by the river side."

"I can find the place."

"Will you meet us there at nine o'clock to-night?"

I looked askance at him.

"But why cross the river? This side affords many likely spots."

"Very true, Monsieur. But the Marquis has business at Chambord this evening, after which there will be no reason—indeed, it will inconvenience him exceedingly—to return to Blois."

"What!" I cried, more and more astonished. "St. Auban is leaving Blois?"

"This evening, sir."

"But, Vicomte, why make an assignation in such a place, and at night, when at any hour of the day I can meet the Marquis on this side, without suffering the inconvenience of crossing the river?"

"There will be a bright moon, well up by nine o'clock. Moreover, remember that you cannot, as you say, meet St. Auban on this side at any time he may appoint, since to-night or to-morrow the officer who is in search of you will arrive."

I pondered for a moment. Then, "M. le Vicomte," I said, "in this matter of ground 'tis I who have the first voice."

"How so?"

"Because the Marquis is the affronted one."

"Therefore he has a right to choose."

"A right, yes. But that is not enough. The necessity to fight is on his side. His honour is hurt, not mine. I have whipped him; I am content. Now let him come to me."

"Assuredly you will not be so ungenerous."

"I do not care about journeying to Reaux to afford him satisfaction."

"Does Monsieur fear anything?"

"Vicomte, you go too far!" I cried, my pride gaining the mastery. "Since it is asked of me, I will go."

"M. le Marquis will be grateful to you."

"A fig for his gratitude," I answered, whereupon the Vicomte shrugged his narrow shoulders, and his errand done, took his leave of me.

When he was gone I called Michelot to tell him of the journey I must go that night, so that he might hold himself in readiness.

"Why, if Monsieur will pardon me," quoth he, "do you go to meet the Marquis de St. Auban at St. Sulpice des Reaux by night?"

"Precisely what I asked Vilmorin. The Marquis desires it, and—what will you? Since I am going to kill the man, I can scarce do less than kill him on a spot of his own choosing."

Michelot screwed up his face, and scratched at his grey beard with his huge hand.

"Does no suspicion of foul play cross your mind, Monsieur?" he inquired timidly.

"Shame on you, Michelot!" I returned, with some heat. "Do you not yet understand the ways of gentlemen. Think you that M. de St. Auban would stoop to such a deed as that? He would be shamed for ever. Pooh! I would as soon suspect my Lord Cardinal of stealing the chalices from Notre Dame. Go, see to my horse. I am riding to Canaples."

As I rode out towards the Château I fell to thinking, and my thoughts turning to Vilmorin, I marvelled at the part he was playing in this little comedy of a cabal against Andrea de Mancini. His tastes and instincts were of the boudoir, the antechamber, and the table. He wore a sword because it was so ordained by fashion, and because the hilt was convenient for the display of a jewel or two. Certainly 'twas not for utility that it hung beside him, and no man had ever seen it drawn. Nature had made him the most pitiful coward begotten. Why, then, should he involve himself in an affair which promised bloodshed, and which must be attended by many a risk for him? There was in all this some mystery that I could not fathom.

From the course into which they had slipped, my thoughts were diverted, when I was within half-a-mile of the Château, by the sight of a horseman stationed, motionless, among the trees that bordered the road. It occurred to me that men take not such a position without purpose—usually an evil one. I slackened speed somewhat and rode on, watching him sharply. As I came up, he walked his horse forward to meet me, and I beheld a man in the uniform of the *gardes du corps*, in whom presently I recognised the little sparrow Malpertuis, with whom I had exchanged witticisms at Choisy. He was the one man wanting to complete the trinity that had come upon us at the inn of the *Connêtable*.

It flashed across my mind that he might be the officer charged with my arrest, and that he had arrived sooner than had been expected. If so, it was likely to go ill with him, for I was not minded to be taken until St. Auban's soul sped downwards.

He hailed me as I advanced, and, indeed, rode forward to meet me.

"You are come at last, M. de Luynes," was his greeting; "I have waited for you this hour past."

"How knew you I should ride this way?"

"I learnt that you would visit Canaples before noon. Be good enough to quit the road and pass under those trees with me. I have something to say to you, but it were not well that we should be seen together."

"For the sake of your character or mine, M. Malappris?"

"Malpertuis!" he snapped.

"Malpertuis," I corrected. "You were saying that we should not be seen together."

"St. Auban might hear of it."

"Ah! And therefore?"

"You shall learn." We were now under the trees, which, albeit leafless, yet screened us partly from the road. He drew rein, and I followed his example.

"M. de Luynes," he began, "I am or was a member of the cabal formed against Mazarin's aims in the matter of the marriage of Mademoiselle de Canaples to his nephew. I joined hands with St. Auban, lured by his protestations that it is not meet that such an heiress as Yvonne de Canaples should be forced to marry a foreigner of no birth and less distinction whilst France holds so many noble suitors to her hand. This motive, by which I know that even Eugène de Canaples was actuated, was, St. Auban gave me to understand, his only one for embarking upon this business, as it was also Vilmorin's. Now, M. de Luynes, I have to-day discovered that I have been duped by St. Auban and *his* dupe, Vilmorin. St. Auban lied to me; another motive brings him into the affair. He seeks himself, by any means that may present themselves, to marry Yvonne—and her estates, whilst the girl, I am told, loathes him beyond expression. Vilmorin, again, is actuated by no less a purpose. And so, what think you these two knaves—this master knave and his dupe—have determined? To carry off Mademoiselle by force."

"Heaven forbid!" I burst out, and would have added more, but his gesture silenced me, and he continued—

"Vilmorin believes that St. Auban is helping him in this, whereas St. Auban is but fooling him with ambiguous speeches until they have the lady safe. Then might will assert itself, and St. Auban need but show his fangs to drive the sneaking coward away from the prize he fondly dreams is to be his."

"When do these gentlemen propose to carry out their plan? Have they determined that?" I inquired breathlessly.

"Aye, they have. They hope to accomplish it this very day. Mademoiselle de Canaples has received a letter wherein she is asked to meet her anonymous correspondent in the coppice yonder, at the Angelus, this evening, if she would learn news of great importance to her, touching a conspiracy against her father."

"Faugh!" I sneered. "'Tis too poor a bait to lure her with."

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"Say you so? Believe me, that unless she be dissuaded she will comply with the invitation, so cunningly was the letter couched. A closed carriage will be waiting at this very spot. Into this St. Auban, Vilmorin, and their braves will thrust the girl, then away through Blois, and beyond it for a mile or so, in the direction of Meung, thereby misleading any chance pursuers. There they will quit the coach, and take a boat that is to be in waiting for them, and which will bear them back with the stream to Chambord. Thereafter, Heaven pity the poor lady, if they get thus far without mishap!"

"Now I understand!" I cried, slapping my thigh. And to myself I thought of the assignation at St. Sulpice des Reaux; and the reason for this, as also St. Auban's resolution to so suddenly quit Blois, grew of a sudden clear to me. Also did I recall the riddle touching Vilmorin's conduct, which, a few moments ago, I had puzzled over, and of which, methought, that I now held the solution.

"What do you understand?" asked Malpertuis.

"Something that was told me this morning," I made answer; then spoke of gratitude, wherein he cut me short.

"I ask no thanks!" he said curtly. "You owe me none. What I have done is not for love of you or Mancini; for I love neither of you. It is done because I am in honour bound to do it. I told St. Auban that I would have no part in this outrage. But that is not enough; I owe it to my honour to attempt the frustration of so dastardly a plan. You, M. de Luynes, appear to be the most likely person to encompass this, in the interests of your friend, Mancini; I leave the matter therefore in your hands. Good-day."

And with this abrupt leave-taking, the little fellow doffed his hat to me, and wheeling his horse, he set spurs in its flanks, and was gone before a word of mine could have stayed him.

My thoughts were diverted by the sight of a horseman stationed, motionless, among the trees that bordered the road.

CHAPTER XI.

Of a Woman's Obstinacy.

"M. de Luynes is a wizard," quoth Andrea, laughing, in answer to something that had been said.

It was afternoon, we had dined, and the bright sunshine and springlike mildness of the weather had lured us out upon the terrace. Yvonne and Geneviève occupied the stone seat. Andrea had perched himself upon the granite balustrade, and facing them he sat, swinging his shapely legs to and fro, as he chatted merrily, whilst on either side of him stood the Chevalier de Canaples and I.

"If M. de Luynes be as great a wizard in other things as with the sword, then in truth, he is a fearful magician," said Canaples.

I bowed, yet not so low but that I detected a sneer on Yvonne's lips.

"So, pretty lady," said I to myself, "we shall see if presently your lip will curl when I show you something of my wizard's art."

And presently my chance came. M. de Canaples found reason to leave us, and no sooner was he gone than Geneviève remembered that she had that day discovered a budding leaf upon one of the rose-trees in the garden below. Andrea naturally caused an argument by asserting that she was the victim of her fancy, as it was by far too early in the year. By that means, these two found the plea they sought for quitting us, since neither could rest until the other was convinced.

So down they went into that rose-garden, which, methought, was like to prove their fool's paradise, and Yvonne and I were left alone. Then she also arose, but, as she was on the point of quitting me, "Mademoiselle," I ventured, "will you honour me by remaining for a moment? There is something that I would say to you."

With raised eyebrows, she gave me a glance mingled with that superciliousness which she was for ever bestowing upon me, and which, from the monotony of it alone, grew irksome.

"What can you have to say to *me*, M. de Luynes?"

"Will you not be seated? I shall not long detain you, nevertheless——"

"If I stand, perchance you will be more brief. I am waiting, Monsieur."

I shrugged my shoulders rudely. Why, indeed, be courteous where so little courtesy was met with?

"A little while ago, Mademoiselle, when M. de Mancini dubbed me a wizard, you were good enough to sneer. Now a sneer, Mademoiselle, implies unbelief, and I would convince you that you were wrong to disbelieve."

"If you have no other motive for detaining me, suffer me to depart," she interrupted, with some

warmth. "Whether you be a wizard or not, is of no moment to me."

"And yet I dare swear that you will be of a different mind within five minutes. A wizard is one who discloses things unknown to his fellow men. I am about to convince you that I can do this, and by convincing you I am about to serve you."

"I seek neither conviction nor service at your hands," she answered.

"Your courtesy dumfounds me, Mademoiselle."

"No less than your insolence dumfounds me," she retorted, with crimson cheeks. "Do you forget, sir, that I know you for what you are—a gamester, a libertine, a duellist, the murderer of my brother?"

"That your brother lives, Mademoiselle, is, methinks, sufficient proof that I have not murdered him."

"You willed his death if you did not encompass it; so 'tis all one. Do you not understand that it is because my father receives you here, thanks to M. de Mancini, your friend—a friendship easily understood from the advantages you must derive from it—that I consent to endure your presence and the insult of your glance? Is it not enough that I should do this, and have you not wit enough to discern it, without adding to my shame by your insolent call upon my courtesy?"

Her words cut me as no words that I ever heard, and, more than her words, her tone of loathing and disgust unspeakable. For half that speech I should have killed a man—indeed I had killed men for less than half. And yet for all the passion that raged in my soul, I preserved upon my countenance a smiling mask. That smile exhausted her patience and increased her loathing, for, with a contemptuous exclamation she turned away.

"Tarry but a moment, Mademoiselle," I cried, with a sudden note of command. "Or, if you will go, go then, but take with you my assurance that before nightfall you will weep bitterly for it."

My words arrested her. The mystery of them awakened her curiosity.

"You speak in riddles, Monsieur."

"Like a true wizard, Mademoiselle. You received a letter this morning in a handwriting unknown, and bearing no signature."

She wheeled round and faced me again with a little gasp of astonishment.

"How know you that? Ah! I understand. You wrote it."

"What shrewdness, Mademoiselle!" I laughed ironically. "Come, think again. What need have I to bid you meet me in the coppice yonder? May I not speak freely with you here?"

"You know the purport of that letter?"

"I do, Mademoiselle, and I know more. I know that this hinted conspiracy against your father is a trumped-up lie to lure you to the coppice."

"And for what purpose, pray?"

"An evil one—your abduction. Shall I tell you who penned that note, and who awaits you? The Marquis César de St. Auban!"

She shuddered as I pronounced the name, then, looking me straight between the eyes, "How came you to know these things?" she inquired.

"What does it signify since I know them?"

"This, Monsieur—that unless I learn how, I can attach no credit to your preposterous story."

"Not credit it?" I cried. "Let me assure you that I have spoken the truth. Let me swear it. Go to the coppice at the appointed time, and things will fall out as I have predicted."

"Again, Monsieur, how do you know this?" she persisted, as women will.

"I may not tell you."

We stood close together, and her clear grey eyes met mine, her lip curling in disdain.

"You may not tell me? You need not. I can guess it." And she tossed her shapely head and laughed. "Seek some likelier story, Monsieur. Had you not spoken of it, 'tis likely I should have left the letter unheeded. But your disinterested warning has determined me to go to the *rendezvous*. Shall I tell you what I have guessed? That this conspiracy against my father, the details of which you would not have me learn, is some evil of your own devising. Ah! You change colour," she cried, pointing to my face. Then, with a laugh of disdain, she left me before I had sufficiently recovered from my amazement to bid her stay.

"Heavens!" I cried, as I watched the tall, lissom figure vanish through the portals of the Château. "Did ever God create so crass and obstinate a thing as woman?"

It occurred to me to tell Andrea, and bid him warn her. But then she would guess that I had prompted him. Naught remained but to lay the matter before the Chevalier de Canaples. Already I had informed him of my unpleasantness with St. Auban, and of the duel that was to be fought that night and he, in his turn, had given me the details of his stormy interview with the Marquis, which had culminated in St. Auban's dismissal from Canaples. I had not hitherto deemed it necessary to alarm him with the news imparted me by Malpertuis, imagining that did I inform Mademoiselle, that would suffice.

Now, however, as I have said, no other course was left me but to tell him of it. Accordingly, I went within, and inquired of Guilbert, whom I met in the hall, where I might find the Chevalier. He answered me that M. de Canaples was not in the Château. It was believed that he had gone with M. Louis, the intendant of the estates, to visit the vineyards at Montcroix.

The news made my gorge rise with impatience. Already it was close upon five o'clock, and in another hour the sun would set and the Angelus would toll the knell of Mademoiselle's preposterous suspicions, unless in the meantime I had speech with Canaples, and led him to employ a father's authority to keep his daughter indoors.

Fuming at the delay, I called for my horse, and set out at a brisk trot for Montcroix. But my ride was fruitless; the vineyard peasants had not seen the Chevalier for over a week.

Now 'twixt Montcroix and the Château there lies a good league, and to make matters worse, as I galloped furiously back to Canaples, an evil chance led me to mistake the way, and pursue a track that brought me out to the very banks of the river, with a strong belt of trees screening the Château from sight, and defying me to repair my error by going straight ahead.

I was forced to retrace my steps, and before I had regained the point where I had gone astray, a precious quarter of an hour was wasted, and the sun already hung, a dull red globe, on the brink of the horizon.

Clenching my teeth, I tore at my horse's flanks, and with a bloody heel I drove the maddened brute along at a pace that might have cost us both dearly. I dashed, at last, into the quadrangle, and throwing the reins to a gaping groom, I sprang up the steps.

"Is the Chevalier returned?" I gasped breathlessly.

"Not yet, Monsieur," answered Guilbert, with a tranquillty that made me desire to strangle him.

"Is Mademoiselle in the Château?" was my next question, mechanically asked.

"I saw her on the terrace some moments ago. She has not since come within."

Like one possessed I flew across the intervening room and out on to the terrace. Geneviève and Andrea were walking there, deep in conversation. At another time I might have reviled their lack of prudence. At the moment I did not so much as remark it.

"Where is Mademoiselle de Canaples?" I burst out.

They gazed at me as much astounded by my question and the abruptness of it as by my apparent agitation.

"Has anything happened?" inquired Geneviève, her blue eyes wide open.

"Yes—no; naught has happened. Tell me where she is. I must speak to her."

"She was here a while ago," said Andrea, "but she left us, to stroll along the river bank."

"How long is it since she left you?"

"A quarter of an hour perhaps!"

"Something *has* happened!" cried Geneviève, and added more maybe, but waited not to hear.

Muttering curses as I ran—for 'tis my way to curse where pious souls might pray—I sped back to the quadrangle and my horse.

"Follow me!" I shouted to the groom, "you and as many of your fellows as you can find. Follow me at once—at once, mark you—to the coppice by the river." And without waiting for his answer, I sent my horse thundering down the avenue. The sun was gone, leaving naught but a roseate streak to tell of its passage, and at that moment a distant bell tinkled forth the Angelus.

With whip, spur and imprecations I plied my steed, a prey to such excitement as I had never known until that moment—not even in the carnage of battle.

I had no plan. My mind was a chaos of thought, without a single clear idea to light it, and I never so much as bethought me that single-handed I was about to attempt to wrest Yvonne from the hands of perchance half-a-dozen men. To save time I did not far pursue the road, but, clearing a hedge, I galloped as hard as I could across the meadow towards the coppice by the water side. As I rode I saw no sign of any moving thing. No sound disturbed the evening's stillness save the dull thump of my horse's hoofs upon the turf, and a great fear arose in my heart that I might come too late.

At last I reached the belt of trees, and my fears grew into certainty. The place was deserted.

She wheeled round and faced me with a little gasp of astonishment.

Then a fresh hope sprang up. Perchance, thinking of my warning, she had seen the emptiness of her suspicions towards me, and had pursued that walk of hers in another direction.

But when I had penetrated to the little open space within that cluster of naked trees, I had proof overwhelming that the worst had befallen. Not only on the moist ground was stamped the impress of struggling feet, but on a branch I found a strip of torn green velvet, and remembering the dress she had worn that day, I understood to the full the significance of that rag, and understanding it, I groaned aloud,

(To be continued.)

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Short Stories That . . . . . Make You Laugh.

We devote every week space in *Short Stories* to pithy, humorous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. To those readers who submit storyettes which are used, a six shilling novel will be awarded. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case, the source MUST be stated. Attempts must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, January 13th. Postcards only, please.

Nothing to Grasp.

"I CAN'T give you a job," said Mr. Dimity to an applicant for employment. "I'd like to employ you, but you grasp the situation, don't you?" "Well, sir," was the reply, "under the circumstances I hardly see how I can."

Charging for Time.

CHEMIST'S ASSISTANT: "Good gracious! I have kept that woman waiting three-quarters of an hour. I forgot all about her prescription." Chemist: "You will have to charge her a good tall price in order to make her think you had a lot of trouble in mixing it up."

He had Sold the Apricots.

"DON'T you eat tart?" he asked the young man who sat next to him in the restaurant. "Oh yes," "But you don't take any." "He said apricot tart." "But what's the matter with apricot tart?" "Why, I'm the grocery clerk who sold him the tinned apricots, and gave him twenty per cent. off because we had had the tins in stock three years."

His Dearest Treasure.

"YOUNG man," said the fond father, "in giving you my daughter I have intrusted you with the dearest treasure of my life." The young man was duly impressed. Then he looked at his watch. "Really," he remarked, "I had no idea it was so late. The trams have stopped. Could I borrow your bicycle to get back home?" "Young man, I would not trust anybody on earth with that bicycle."

Ample Proof.

"YOU'RE pretty small," said the man who was engaging some men to go on an exploring expedition with him. "I shouldn't think you had enough endurance to stand——" "Endurance!" exclaimed the little man. "Why, sir, I've got a record for that." "How so?" "I put in a whole afternoon at a football match in the rain with a girl six feet tall, and held the umbrella over her head. If that doesn't show endurance I should like to know——" "That's enough. You'll do."

A Pity to Part Them.

AN elderly lady went to an English country market one day to buy a Christmas goose. At a stall where she called, two live geese were exposed for sale, both in custody of a cherry-cheeked country lass. The little maid would not sell one goose without the other. Remembering that a friend had expressed a wish for a Christmas bird, the customer was easily prevailed on to take both. But as she was concluding the bargain it occurred to her to ask the maid why she had refused to sell the geese separately "If you please, ma'am," was the naïve answer. "mother said as how the geese had lived together for twenty years, and it would be cruel to part them.'

She Hadn't Told.

"JENNIE," said little Mabel to her big sister at breakfast, "did you tell papa?" "Tell papa what?" asked Jennie. "Why you told Mr. Bustler last night if he did it again you'd tell papa—and he did it again. I saw him!" And then papa looked at Jennie over his glasses.

Lowering the Record.

MOTHER (to her elderly unmarried daughter): "Why Julia, what do you mean by using the Family Bible in that way? You are scratching out figures in the family record, and inserting others." Julia: "It is a record of my birth, isn't it?" "Yes, it is." "Well, I'm lowering the record."

One was Enough.

"HOLD on!" said the doorkeeper at the theatre, as the swain pushed past him, "you can't both go in on that; this ticket is for only one seat." "That's all right, mister, one cheer's been big enough to hold both of us many a time, ain't it, Liza?" And in a cloud of Liza's best blushes they were gone through.

A Test of True Gentility.

"WHAT'S the new lodger like, Mary Ann?" "He's no gentleman, whatever he's like!" "No gentleman! What's he been and done?" "Why, he see me a-carryin' up the coals, an' 'e says: 'I'm afraid that scuttle's too heavy for you,' 'e says; 'pray let me carry it!' 'e says. An' 'e ups and carries it 'isself, just like a footman!"

Rather Suspicious.

MABEL: "Such a joke on Mr. Gayboy. We were out on the balcony between the dances, and he got the sleeve of his dress coat all over red paint from one of the posts that were just painted." Maud: "And did you go near the post?" Mabel: "No. Why?" Maud: "Because you have red paint all over the side of your dress."

Keeping Up Appearances.

IT was one of Smith's little weaknesses to appear to be in a better position than was really the case. One day he took his eldest son for a walk, and permitted him to play with some other boys while he read the paper. On the way home Smith inquired: "What were you talking about to those boys?" "Oh!" replied the boy, "I was telling them that you were our footman. I did it to keep up appearances, you know."

He Had Come for the Rest of It.

DOORKEEPER OF THEATRE: "You cannot come in on this ticket. It is dated 1896." McWhahagan: "Oi'd like to know whei Oi can't come in with it. The thayaytre sould it to me to come in." "They couldn't possibly sell you a ticket dated 1896. That's five years old." "Av coorse it is. Look here; this here programme sez: 'Foive years elapse between acts wan an two,' so Oi've come to see the second act; but Oi'll be hanged if Oi remember what the first was about."

ONE correct claim has been received in connection with the Photo Competition this week, and a £5 note has therefore been sent to

Mrs. Weigall,
Corromander,
Southfield Road,
Paignton, Devon.

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A SWISS LOVE STORY.

In a pretty chalet that nestled high upon the shaggy breast of Mount Obgadin lived the widow Neur and her daughter Marie.

When fierce storms came rushing down the mountain side, she knew the trees would bend their tall heads together and twine their strong arms around her home, until, robbed of his victim, the baffled storm rushed on.

When morning broke the same friends stood erect and stately, drawing aside their leaves and branches, that the sunbeams might not linger in their soft embraces, but hasten down to awaken their favourite, Marie.

Very lovely was the little Swiss maid, with violet eyes that now danced and sparkled and then grew soft and tender as a little child's. Two rose-red lips shut in her pearly teeth, and when she smiled a dimple danced for a moment on her peachy cheek. Her hair hung in caressing curls around her low white forehead, and fell in ripples of sunshine far below her slender waist. And her voice! Ah! that was Marie's greatest charm. Soft and clear, not a discordant note marred its sweet, pure harmony. Sometimes as she sang at her evening devotions the herdsmen far below in the valley, catching faint notes of her song, looked up and crossed themselves, half-believing they heard an echo of an angel choir.

But very few knew of Marie's beauty. For when she went with her mother on one of her rare visits to the hamlet below, she brushed her wavy hair straight and smooth from her forehead, and braided it in long stiff plaits which fell down her back.

Her eyelids, with their curtains of long, silky lashes, drooped over her dancing eyes until one looked in vain for a glimpse of their beauty. Her red lips shut firmly over her pearly teeth, while the dimple hid itself resolutely away from sight. And her sweet voice, frightened at its own sound so far from home, grew faint and husky, until, in this shrinking, sober damsel, walking so timidly beside the widow Neur, you would have found it hard to recognise the beautiful Marie of the mountain.

So it happened that only her mother and one other person knew how good and sweet and fair Marie was.

The other was a stranger who came from a far-away country, and spent his summers in a little house on the mountain's very top.

The simple villagers called him "the wizard," and told strange tales of how he spent whole nights gazing at the heavens through a long tube; that he could foretell to an hour when the sun would cover itself with darkness; but strangest of all, he had a little wire stretched for miles over hills and valleys to the great city! This wire talked to him in a queer language which no one could understand.

"Tick, tick, tickety, tick," it said, and it told him things that happened miles and miles away.

Marie did not know how wise the wizard was when he came to her home one morning and asked for a drink of water.

He followed her to the spring when she went for it, and stopped by the way to break open a curious stone. He showed Marie how queerly marked it was inside, and then told her a story about it. The usually timid maiden was so interested she forgot to be frightened, and thus a strong friendship between the two was begun.

After this, the wizard often came to the widow Neur's chalet for rest and refreshment on his long rambles, and Marie unconsciously revealed her charms to him, one by one, until long before the first summer was ended the stranger knew that no girl in all the canton could be compared with Marie.

On the other side of the mountain from the widow Neur's lived another widow. She, too, had but one child, a son, who was the pride and delight of her life. This was the brave young hunter and guide, Gustavus Friel.

Everyone knew and liked Gustavus. He was straight, tall and handsome with flashing brown eyes, and a laugh as frank as a child's. He was the favourite of the canton, and there was not a girl within its bounds who would not have been proud to plight her troth with him.

Gustavus, however, cared little for the Obgadin maidens. He would far rather chase the chamois up the mountain-side or guide travellers through its dangerous passes than spend his time with the finest of the maids of the hamlet.

His mother often said: "My son, when wilt thou bring me home a daughter and thyself a wife?"

And Gustavus, smiling and pressing a kiss on her forehead, would answer:

"When I find a maid as good as thee, mother; but I want no idle, shrill-voiced wife to disturb our quiet home."

But one day his mother said more sadly and seriously than ever before:

"Gustavus, I am growing old and feeble. I can no longer make and mend thy clothes and keep our home. Thou must have a wife. Promise me at the fête next week thou wilt choose one from among the maidens there."

Gustavus reluctantly gave the desired promise, but it weighed heavily upon him. He could think of nothing else, and the more he pondered the heavier his heart grew.

At last he seized his gun and went out on the mountain, but the perplexing question followed him, until in despair he threw himself on the ground groaning: "Oh, that some wise man would make this choice for me!"

A moment after he looked up and saw, as if in answer to his wish, the wizard approaching him.

"Why," he exclaimed to himself, "did I not think of him before? Surely he, if anyone, can help me." Then, with a throbbing heart, Gustavus sprang up to meet him.

The wizard greeted Gustavus warmly, for he felt a strong friendship for the young guide who had taken him safely through many a dangerous mountain excursion.

And now his sympathetic question: "Why, what's troubling you, my boy?" opened the way for Gustavus to pour out all his perplexity, ending the recital with the question:

"Canst thou not help me choose a good wife who would make my life happy? For now I have given my mother my promise to find a wife at the fête next week."

The wizard smiled sympathetically, and then thought in silence a little while before he answered:

"If a pure true heart is united to a true, pure heart both lives must be happy."

"Alas!" answered Gustavus, "but I know not which maiden among them all has the purest, truest heart."

"There will be one such heart at the fête," answered the wizard, "but you may fail to recognise it. However, if you will come to me to-morrow I will give you a charm that will show you this heart."

Here was comfort, indeed, and with a light heart Gustavus thanked his friend and bounded forward.

Left alone, the wizard continued down the mountainside, until he came in sight of the widow Neur's chalêt, where he found Marie sitting by the spring. Instead of her usual sunshiny smile, tiny tear-drops stood in her eyes, and there was a grieved look about her rosy lips that made him wish to comfort her.

"What is the matter, little one?" he asked gently.

"Oh, sir," she said, "I want to see the great fête next week, but I have no pretty ornaments to wear, and then——" The long curtains drooped over her shining eyes and the sweet voice sank almost to a whisper. "The good mother says none of the young men will care to dance with me."

"But why?" asked the wizard, in surprise.

"Because I cannot talk and laugh with them as other maidens do. My heart beats fast if they do but glance toward me, and I know not what to say, and so"—here a tear slipped from under the long lashes—"my mother says I had better not go."

"Courage, little one," the wizard answered. "Tell your mother," he added, "that I am going to lend you a silver belt to wear, and that my knowledge tells me that the bravest, handsomest youth in all the land will dance with you quite joyfully."

The happy Marie thanked the wizard as Gustavus had done, and ran off to tell the wonderful news to her mother.

Early next morning Gustavus went for his charm. He found the wizard waiting for him, and, taking him into his strange room, the wise man said, smiling, as he had the day before, half-quizzically, half-sympathetically:

"Here's the charm, my good fellow. You see it is a magic ring. Put it on before you go to the fête, and be sure you dance with every maiden there. When you place your arm about the waist of the one whose heart is true and good a strange feeling will run through you and your hand will cling to her. But be sure that you dance with all!"

Gustavus, greatly wondering, thanked the wizard, and slipped on the ring.

It was a curious circlet of iron, with a flat extension, which the wizard bade him wear pointing toward his palm.

When the fête day came Gustavus was there among the other young men, eager to try his charm.

All the maidens of Obgadin canton were there also, and on the outskirts of one of the gay crowds little Marie hovered timidly beside her mother.

"Why didst thou come, Marie?" asked one of the girls.

"Didst thou think any youth would want to dance with a mouse to-day?" asked another.

Then, seeing the quick tears trembling on Marie's lashes, she added more kindly:

"Ah, well, thou canst at least see our good times."

"What a lovely belt thou hast, Marie!" cried another maiden. "Where didst thou get it?"

"The wizard gave it her," the widow Neur answered shortly, for she did not relish the girl's tone, and she drew her daughter away.

"Come, Marie, let us sit here under the trees and watch the dance."

Marie nestled close to her mother's side, and, as the hours fled and no youth asked her to dance, her head dropped lower and lower, and she wondered if the wise man had made a mistake.

In the meantime Gustavus danced with one after another of the maids, but though he watched with intense eagerness, not once did he feel the strange thrill for which he waited.

"I have danced with them all," he said at last to himself, "except that shy one over there; surely she is not the girl! But as I promised to dance with all, I will try her, too."

He asked her name of one of the girls, and then going to her, said simply:

"Marie, wilt thou dance with me?"

Astonishment and delight made Marie for a moment forget her shyness. The wizard's words were come true!

Rising quickly, she said, smiling upon him:

"Art thou come?"

"She is not so plain, after all," thought Gustavus, as he answered:

"Wast thou looking for me, Marie?"

Marie hung her head without answering, and Gustavus wondering a little at her words, led her to the dance.

As he placed his arm around her his hand touched her shining belt.

Instantly a strange thrill ran through them both, and Gustavus' arm seemed to cling to Marie's waist.

"Marie, didst thou feel that?" he cried earnestly.

And Marie smilingly answered:

"Yes."

So they began dancing, and as they danced it seemed to those watching them that a wonderful transformation came over Marie.

Her hair, shaken loose from its long, stiff braids, hung like a glittering golden veil all around her, her beautiful eyes shone like stars, and the dimpled cheeks and pearly teeth formed a fit hiding-place for the laughing voice that now and then rang sweet and clear from her rosy lips. Not one of the village maidens was half so fair as she!

"Surely," said the amazed villagers, "there never was such a handsome couple."

"But is not Marie under a charm," cried others, "she has suddenly grown so lovely?"

But the widow Neur smiled to herself and said:

"Love's witchery, if it is true and pure, will transform all of us and bring out all that is loveliest and best within us."

As for Gustavus, he thought rightly that he had never seen so good and beautiful a creature, and he blessed the wizard for the charm which had led his heart to her.

Long before the summer ended, Gustavus took home Marie to be his own and his mother's greatest joy and happiness.

When M. le Wizard returned to Paris that winter, he read a scientific paper before the *savants* of the Academy.

In it he detailed many of his wonderful discoveries and his work during the summer. But he did not speak of the most interesting of all—how, by the aid of a little magnet concealed in a steel belt, and a rude ring, he had brought together two loving hearts, and by so doing had caught some of the happiness of paradise and imprisoned it in a chalêt on old Obgadin Mountain.

P. G. M.

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NAME-HUNTING COMPETITION: RAILWAY STATIONS.

1st Prize: £25.

2nd Prize: A Magnificent Parlour Billiard Table.*

3rd Prize: A Columbia Graphophone with 12 Records.

One Sovereign will be given to every Competitor, no matter how many errors may be made, who is one of those whose attempts form the greatest number sent in from any one place mentioned in the correct solutions to this Competition.

For example, if more competitors send in from *Newhaven* than from any other place, each of these competitors will receive £1, no matter how wrong they may be.

Each separate competitor will count as one—not each set of coupons. Therefore, induce your friends to enter for the competition. If you get a few friends to do so, and they in turn each induce a few friends, the number will soon mount up, and *each* will get a golden sovereign, no matter how many.

Don't wait until you are half-way through the competition before you ask your friends. Tell them about it *at once*.

** The Billiard Table is made by J. R. Mally and Co., 15 Goswell Road, E.C., and will go into a furnished room 13ft. square. It has a slate bed, and will stand on any dining-table. The cues, balls, marking-board and spirit level are included.*

Below will be found thirty-six sets of words, each set describing the name of a railway station in the United Kingdom, the name of which will be found in Bradshaw's Railway Guide.

Write down in the spaces provided the names of all those places you can discover. If you can't find all, put down as many as you can.

Note These Facts. . .

1. Names must be written in ink.
2. Only one name is allowed against each set of words.
3. When you have filled up your list cut it out and get the next number of *Pearson's Weekly*, in which another coupon appears.
4. You may send in as many sets of lists as you like, but each set will be accepted independently, and must be pinned together.
5. In the event of the prize being divided, only one share will go to each successful competitor, no matter how many duplicate attempts he may send in.

The first prize of £25 will be given to the reader from whom we receive the greatest number of correct solutions. The second prize will be given to the sender of the next most nearly correct solutions, and so on. In the event of a tie, the prizes will be awarded at the discretion of the Editor, whose decision is final.

←——Cut across here——→

Example:— Fre-h Harbo r ..... Newhaven...		
1. Body of ship	13. Hero of Waterloo	25. Pious chief .....
2. Celebrated horse race	14. Continue painting...	26. Guides by the hands .....
3. Clamouring	15. New sovereign	27. Look, royal bird.....
4. Strip off rind	16. Caution cured pork	28. Military engagement .....
5. Tying ham in knots	17. Distribute cards	29. Lobe of ear .....
6. One-wheel vehicle.....	18. Queen's residence	30. Continue performing .....
7. Vessel in which you bathe.....	19. Thrusts down.....	31. Bird of the heron family .....
8. Big gun; thoroughfare.....	20. One who pins	32. Spoil gate.....
9. Sage of Chelsea.....	21. Metal in natural state	33. Ship's company .....
10. Completed D	22. Stuffed footstools.....	34. A football game.....
11. Small, headless nail; stream.....	23. Perform on lawn	35. An insect; lings..... .....
12. Tumbler, avaunt!	24. Food untouched	36. Potentate is angry .....

Name..... **Address**..... .....

.....

Get *Pearson's Weekly* dated January 16th, on sale next Friday.—Another coupon appears in it.

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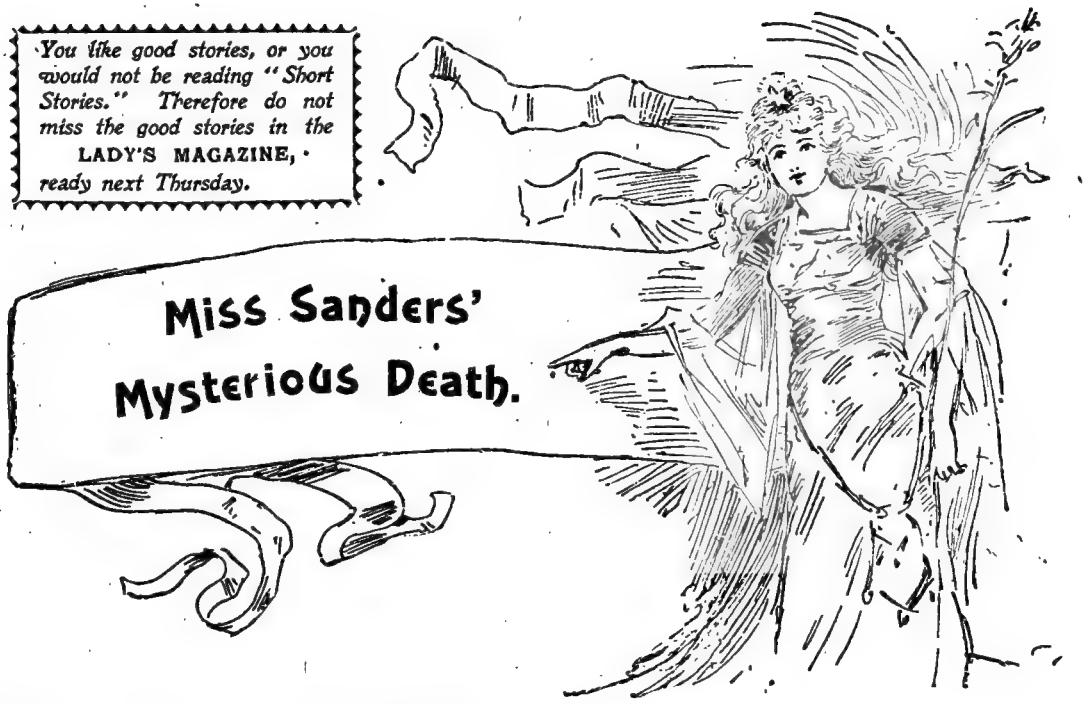
You like good stories, or you would not be reading "Short Stories." Therefore do not miss the good stories in the LADY'S MAGAZINE, *ready next Thursday.*



Miss Sanders' Mysterious Death.

NORBURY HALL is the name of a fashionable boarding school for girls, situated about a mile and three quarters from a pretty little Devon village. There were about three score of girls at the Hall, and not a man about the building. Though it is true there were three men teachers who lived perhaps a quarter of a mile away, and there were four gardeners who lived in their cottages about the same distance in the opposite direction.

It was almost ten o'clock, and profound silence had reigned throughout the Hall for some time. Lights had been extinguished at nine-thirty as was the rule. At nine the evening's studies ceased, and the next half-hour was allowed for the girls to retire. At ten they were supposed to be peacefully wrapped in their beauty sleep.

Suddenly a fearful shriek rent the air.

Now a mouse might have caused a girl to shriek mildly, or if some over studious girl, having kept her candle alight while poring over her lessons, had suddenly had a cold key dropped down her neck by a room mate with a tendency for practical jokes, she might also have given a scream of fright. But it would not have been in either case like the wild shriek that did come from somewhere in the building, and every mother's daughter there knew it.

Girls believe there is safety in numbers in such cases, and it is surprising how quickly they emerged from their rooms, in all stages of undress, and met in the great hallway, where they passed whispered words of inquiry as they huddled together.

The appearance of the headmistress and two of her assistants put a quietus on the girls.

"What is it?" she asked, trying to be more stern than usual, to keep up her courage.

No one could give a satisfactory reply for no one knew. Some conjectured that the cry came from the upper floor, others ventured that it came from the lower, where were the chapel and recitation rooms, now dark and deserted; others insisted that it sounded without, in the grounds.

The headmistress, Miss Crapple, maintained her reputation for firmness of character and quick decision; she satisfied herself that the cry had not come from the upper storey where her apartments, and those of the other teachers and some of the girls were situated, and she headed the procession of a dozen or more candles downstairs to the corridor below, where the other girls had now assembled.

Miss Crapple ran her sharp eye over the feminine army which surrounded her.

"Where is Miss Deering?" she asked loudly. The girls looked at each other in consternation, and drew back from a certain door, which it was then noticed remained closed, though all the others had been left ajar as the girls came out,

"Where's Bessie Sanders? She isn't here either!" chorussed several girls with bated breath.

Bessie Sanders and Alice Deering were close friends and room-mates. The girls of Norbury Hall lived well. Some of their apartments were superbly furnished. They were all of good families, and were not watched as in some schools. Good conduct was a point of honour in which it was believed they never failed.

Miss Crapple stepped up to the door of this room with a firm tread, though her heart was beating fit to burst.

She knocked.

No response was made.

She tried the door handle. The door was locked!

She stooped to the key-hole, the room within was lighted. She asked one of her assistants to fetch her

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bunch of master-keys. A score of girls moved off with her as a body guard. When they returned, Miss Crapple inserted one, and after some difficulty, succeeded in forcing out the other key, and opening the door.

Miss Crapple entered.

The girls crowded about the door, but none would venture in, until those at the rear, not more bold, but pushing and craning to try and see, forced a dozen into the room.

Thus in the room they followed Miss Crapple, and they made the discovery at the same time as the head-mistress, and with wild screams of terror fled back to the hall.

In the centre of the room was a table, upon which was a lighted lamp and several books. Lying upon the floor on the opposite side was the body of a girl. It was Bessie Sanders.

Miss Crapple turned white, and a shiver ran through her frame, but she kept her courage. The girl was dead. There could be no doubt about that. The white face and the rigid features told that. The handle of a knife protruding from the girl's bosom showed how the deed had been done.

The headmistress leant over the girl, and called to some of those standing at the door to come to her assistance. Several ventured in.

"Help me to lift this—Miss Sanders on to the sofa," said Miss Crapple.

One of the girls who had assisted in lifting Miss Sanders' body on to the sofa, suddenly cried in a hysterical voice—

"Look!"

She pointed to the dead girl's bosom. "The knife—that did it—is Miss Deering's! And Miss Deering is not here!"

Then she fainted. Another chill of horror convulsed all the girls, and while this one was being brought to, another became hysterical, and several others burst into tears, making the scene one of pathos and confusion.

When the girl had been brought out of her faint, Miss Crapple said, "We must have assistance. Ring the chapel bell, it will arouse the men."

A dozen girls went out to do this bidding. The chapel bell could be rung by pulling a rope which hung in the lower main hallway. Soon the clash and clangour of the bell sounded out in the still night as it had never done before, all who heard those sounds would know that there was something wrong at the Hall.

While this was being done, Miss Crapple, and some of the more courageous girls were making a search of the rooms. Two of the girls, holding fast to each other's hands, paused before one of the windows, and drew the curtains back. The window was open!

Outside the window, was a small stone balcony, over which a growth of ivy trailed. The girls peered out. The light from within the room shone upon the dress of a girl, lying still upon the balcony.

"Miss Crapple, here is Miss Deering!" one of the girls cried, which brought all who were present to the window. One of the girls fetched the student's lamp from the table, and its rays streamed out in the darkness, and disclosed the fact that Miss Deering lay huddled upon the balcony in an insensible condition. Perhaps she was dead too.

Miss Crapple, with wonderful strength, got out of the window and lifted the girl, then, with the aid of those within, she was carried in and laid upon the bed.

It was then seen that she lived, though she carried a terrible wound on her head. If she could be brought to, perhaps she would be able to disclose the secret of the terrible doings of the night, thought Miss Crapple.

One of the girls exclaimed excitedly:

"Oh, dear, if we only could get a doctor. I'm sure she'll never live till morning."

* * * * *

Though it seemed hours to the girls of the school before help arrived, it was in fact less than half-an-hour from the time the bell first clanged, when the venerable headmaster of the school, Mr. Converse, with his two assistant professors, were in the main hall asking the cause of alarm.

At such times a man is a very useful article, and the presence of these at once restored quiet and confidence in all present. The men were led first to the room of death, and then the headmaster, with Miss Crapple, went into the room where Miss Deering lay. At this moment three of the gardeners arrived, and two were sent for a doctor at once.

Mr. Converse did what he could for the injured girl, and then began to discuss with the head mistress the awful tragedy, and its possible cause. But it was all conjecture, and not the slightest clue could be found from anything that had ever been said by, or had happened to, either the dead girl or her insensible room mate.

"Scotland Yard must be apprised of this," said Mr. Converse, "but before they come in to muddle up this, I am going to call in my young friend Adrian Skillet, who has startled London and the world with his wonderful ability as a detective."

Accordingly, when the two gardeners returned with the doctor, they were again sent off. This time to the nearest railway station, with instructions to have a message sent to Mr. Skillet over the company's private wire.

The mists had hardly risen from the fields the next morning, when a young man strode up to Norbury Hall, and used both bell and knocker at the main entrance.

It was Mr. Skillet; he had caught the midnight train out of London, and had walked the distance from the station to the school. In a case of this kind time was valuable, and it would be losing time to look about for some means of conveyance.

The headmaster seemed to know who his early visitor was, and he did not keep him waiting many minutes.

"Ah, you are early," he said, greeting the great detective cordially, "I am glad to see you again, though I could wish the need of your presence were less tragic. It is a terrible affair, terrible."

Mr. Skillet led the way upstairs, and straight to the door of the room where the tragedy occurred.

"But how did you know this?" exclaimed Mr. Converse. "Have you seen any of the gardeners?"

"I have met no one," replied Mr. Skillet. "I decided where it had taken place as I crossed the garden. I hope the room has not been disturbed?" he added, as they entered.

"I think not, though of course many of the young ladies were here last night, and they were in a great state of excitement."

"You know each and every one who has been in the room?" the detective asked, without manifesting any undue interest in this particular point.

"Miss Crapple will be able to inform you exactly."

The detective nodded.

Briefly Mr. Converse acquainted the detective with all that had happened.

"Will you be so good as to leave me alone for a time?" asked Mr. Skillet.

"Certainly! You will not disturb this room," pointing to a door that led out of the room in which the tragedy had occurred. "Miss Deering and her attendant are there."

The detective reassured Mr. Converse on this point, and was left alone. For almost an hour he remained therein, and no one knew what he did. The ringing of the first bell caused him to refer to his watch, and he saw it was seven-thirty.

He went out and found Mr. Converse in the office on the floor below.

"The young ladies will be coming down to breakfast presently, I daresay," he said, "Could you bring before me here all who were in the room last night before they sit down to breakfast?"

Mr. Converse promised that it should be done, and went out himself to look up Miss Crapple, and ten minutes later a troop of fifteen young ladies, all looking very sad and frightened and pale, were ushered in before the detective.

Mr. Skillet called each one aside, and held an animated conversation, in which he put quick questions very much to the purpose, and now and then frightened some more than others, as he jotted down in a note-book some of the answers they gave.

When this trying work was over he asked to see Miss Deering, and while the girls trooped into the breakfast-room, he was led upstairs again to the bedside of the girl who perhaps knew more of what had happened than any other living person.

The girl was fortunately awake, and the attendant was trying to persuade her to take some nourishment.

She turned her face to the wall when the two men with Miss Crapple entered the room.

Adrian Skillet moved to the bedside of the girl. Leaning over her he said gently, "Miss Deering, will you tell me all you know of this affair?"

The girl muttered some words, but they were inaudible.

"Do not attempt to deceive me," said the detective, "I know all that has taken place. I know that you understand me, and would reply if you could. I know the motive that prompts you to attempt this deception, you desire to shield the murderer of your friend."

The girl buried her face in the pillow, as though she wished to shut out the words.

"Although everything points to you as being guilty, I know that you are innocent," said Adrian. "You were not in the room when the deed was done, though you came in immediately afterwards.

"You left the room secretly, that is, in a way that nobody but Miss Sanders knew of. There is a rope ladder by which you have been in the habit of passing from your room into the garden. I have this now in my possession. It is evident that you went out into the garden for the purpose of allowing some one to enter the room.

"At any rate that is my belief. A man was in the room, and of this I have absolute proof. I know that he is very tall, by certain marks which his moist hands have left upon the wall.

"I know also that he is light complexioned, and I think I shall be able to recognise him when I meet him, which will be before very long. I am going over to Coreham to-day."

Adrian had named this town only at a venture. It was the nearest town of a goodly size. It was about three miles from the school. But he knew at once that his random shot had gone home, and that the man he wanted was to be found there, for Miss Deering gave a stifled little scream at the mention of the name, and buried her face deeper in the pillow.

"I do not think I will say more," he said, turning to Miss Crapple, and Mr. Converse, who stood near. "It may be serious if I alarm her too much while in this delicate condition."

Converse looked in amazed wonder at his friend the detective. "How did you know all this so soon?"

"By a single hair," replied the detective.

"A hair!"

"Yes. It is a very slender clue, to be sure, but it is the only clue I could find, for the imprint of the fingers upon the wall is by no means conclusive evidence that a man was in the room.

"This hair was the reward of my patient search. It is from a man's head. Look!"

He took a single hair very carefully out of a little book and a powerful magnifying-glass out of another pocket.

"You see how the end is cut? It is a mark that is made by scissors. Its length, too, would indicate that the man wore his hair of medium length. Of all the shades of hair to be found in this school there is not one to match this in colour. If you will look through the glass you will see it has a peculiar kink in it. When I have found the man with hair like that, I have got the one who was in this room last night.

"This young lady would shield him, it seems. Perhaps because she loves him, though I don't know about that yet, because it is evident the man called to visit her friend and not to see her.

"But with this clue I will bring the murderer to the gallows!"

The detective raised his voice so that it could be distinctly heard by the girl in the bed. They were like an electric shock, for she sat up in bed and called out wildly. "You are wrong. No man struck that blow!"

The three turned to Miss Deering.

"Let me tell you now. Listen: It is true a man visited Bessie in that room last night. He has done so often—"

"What!" cried Miss Crapple, in amazed horror, "you dared to permit such infamy!"

"There was no wrong. I know the man, and his honour is above reproach. Even without my confidence in Bessie, I should have no fear.

"Her father denied him the right to call upon her at home because he was poor.

"They loved each other, and I consented to help them in their clandestine meetings. He used to come in by the ladder, often. I was never present, I could not bear it—for—for—I loved him.

"Sometimes I would remain in this room, and sometimes I would go into the garden before he came, and remained there if the night was fine until he went away.

"That was what I did last night, from eight till some time after nine.

"Then I returned, and while concealing the ladder, Bessie screamed. Her cry froze the blood in my veins, but when I got my senses, I parted the curtains and looked into the room.

"Bessie lay still upon the floor. I thought at first she must have fainted, but as I looked I saw something else, the door of the room was softly closing. Then I saw the dagger in Bessie's breast, and I knew she had been murdered, and I knew too, that it must have been done by a jealous woman—one who had loved the man, and having surprised the secret meetings, had killed her rival."

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The girl fell back exhausted.

The professor's eyes searched the detective's face, but no mortal can read the secrets of that mind.

"Let us leave her for the present," said the detective. "I should like to see the young lady who fainted last night, and so quickly recovered."

Miss Crapple sent for the young lady.

"Miss Deering has furnished a valuable clue," Adrian Skillet suggested. "You can tell me, perhaps, Miss Crapple, who the young man is who was refused permission to see Miss Sanders. Her father would, no doubt, have informed you, so that no meetings might take place near the school."

"That is something I cannot understand," replied Miss Crapple. "I am sure nothing of the kind has ever happened. Mr. Sanders himself was here on a visit less than a month ago, and if there had been any cause for greater vigilance over his daughter, I am sure he would have confided in me."

The young lady who had been sent for came, and Adrian Skillet cross-examined her about many things for about fifteen minutes, and then dismissed her.

"Let us go and see Miss Deering again," he said, "I want to have this question about the young man cleared up. We will ask a few direct questions."

They went toward her room. In the hallway they met the nurse just returning. She said the girl had been brought to, and seemed all right now, and that she—the nurse—had gone down to the kitchen to prepare something Miss Deering had specially requested.

When they arrived at the bedroom the bed was empty—the girl had disappeared!

Consternation was in the faces of all save the detective. She was gone, it was clear, but she was not going to get away from him in a few minutes like that.

"Do not be alarmed," he said reassuringly. "I will find her."

How he did it need not be recapitulated here. The remarkable skill with which he could follow an apparently invisible trail was the very foundation of all his greatness. He went out to the hall way to the lower floor, and out into the garden with something of the instinct with which the hound follows the trail. Across the the ground towards a small wood, which he penetrated, and found, as he had expected, that the wall surrounding the college grounds skirted this wood. Upon the top of this wall sat the object of his search. She had dressed herself very hastily, yet there was little in her appearance to excite remark.

The road was well travelled, and many people passed while the detective watched her. She concealed herself adroitly, by means of an overhanging branch of a tree as each pedestrian neared where she sat.

Presently a boy chanced along. This was apparently what she had been waiting for. She called him, and when he approached, held towards him a note and some coins, while she explained what she wished him to do. At this moment the detective approached, and so startled was the girl at his appearance that he possessed himself of the note before she was aware of it. It was addressed to Mr. Edward Trevelyan, of Coreham. This was strong evidence that the man he now wished to find lived in that town. He blew a whistle, which was the signal agreed upon, and two of the college assistants came up in a few minutes, into whose charge he gave Miss Deering.

Then he started on his way to Coreham. As he walked he opened the note and mused upon it. It ran:

"DEAR MR. TREVELYAN,—You are in terrible danger.

A Prisoner for Seventeen Years.

A BIRKENHEAD woman—Mrs. E. McNulty—of 410 Price Street, was practically kept a prisoner within her own house for seventeen years in consequence of a most distressing skin disease. Chas. Forde's Bile Beans for Biliousness completely cured her, and the following is the wonderful story she told to a *Courier* reporter:

"I had enjoyed as good health as anyone could desire until about seventeen years ago, when after attending upon a neighbour's little girl who was down with scarlet fever I contracted the disease myself. In a matter of seven weeks I recovered, but remained for several months in so weak a state that I could scarcely walk across the floor. I was racked with fearful pains in the head; so bad were they at times that I could hardly see. After nine months' suffering I saw a doctor, but he did not effect any good. I then lost my appetite, and anything I ate seemed to make my head worse.

"Then a new development appeared. A fearful rash broke out all over my face. I took every kind of medicine to clear my blood but they only had the effect of making me worse. My face was so bad that I was ashamed to venture out of my house. I was kept a prisoner within doors.

"After trying more medicines and visiting several doctors, I went to the Skin Hospital in Liverpool. There I was examined by many doctors, and underwent a painful operation; but when they told me at length that I should have to have my nose scraped, I was frightened, and I never went again.

"After a number of years of this terrible suffering, I commenced to have a succession of week-end bilious attacks with remarkable regularity. I can safely say that, for upwards of two years, I never knew what it was to be without a bilious attack on Sunday, which prostrated me for the whole day.

"One day (it was a Wednesday) on coming downstairs, I found a little book under the door, telling of the wonderful cures which had been effected by Charles Forde's Bile Beans. I procured a box, and took one of the beans before I went to bed that night. The next morning my head did not feel so heavy, so I continued taking the Beans, and began to feel better and stronger every day. One Sunday when it came to be my usual time to be prostrated with biliousness, I got the dinner ready and sat down and ate a hearty meal, without the least sign of any illness!

"My husband said, 'Whatever is the matter with you to-day? Are you not going to be ill?' Then I told him how I had taken the Bile Beans, and as soon as he saw that they had had such a wonderful effect on me, he sent out for another box. By degrees the rash and spots began to disappear from my face, until I had as clear a complexion as anyone could desire.

"I feel now as though I don't know my own strength, and am as well and hearty as I was when I was a girl of fourteen. Well, that," pointing to a huge basket full of clothes which she had just washed, "is evidence that I am strong enough. For the last four months I have had from seven to ten dozen clothes, and sometimes more, every week, and I have washed them all myself. What is more, I have felt nothing worse at the end of the day than a natural tired feeling, which a night's sound sleep has removed. There is nothing in which I have greater faith than Bile Beans, and I am sure, now that you have heard my story, you will readily understand that."

I have told a story, which may shield you for a time. But if you are guilty—which at this moment I refuse to believe, though every fact tells me so—I pray you hide yourself at the ends of the earth. There must be some excuse. Let me believe that. I have looked upon you as all that a true knight should be, but whether you are what I thought you or a blood-stained murderer, I should still wish to save you. Believe then that there is one that pities you, who forgives, and would do so though the knife were aimed at her own heart. But fly, fly at once, for you are even now being tracked.—F.D."

"Well that is as daft a letter as I ever read," muttered the detective. "And yet the girl has suffered enough to make her so. The facts about this crime are clear enough at any rate.

"This proves that her story about the closing doorway was a falsehood, invented to shield the man. That's a good point settled, for it bothered me."

The detective had no difficulty in finding the home of Trevelyan. He lived with his parents. His mother opened the door. No, he was not at home. She called to some one within.

"He said he was going to get shaved," some one said.

The whereabouts of the barber's shop were asked and pointed out, and the detective easily found it. As he entered the place, he noticed a tall young man, just entering.

He had little doubt it was the man he sought. The moustache was identical.

The detective entered by the side door, and was lucky in finding the barber in the rear of his shop. Through a screen the man in the front part of the shop could be plainly seen. He had taken a seat, and was awaiting the appearance of the man of shears and brush. The detective in a few words explained to the barber the necessity for assuming the position of an assistant for a time, and such was the barber's astonishment, that the detective had divested the barber of his garment and put it on himself before that worthy realised it. He must have been hypnotised.

The detective walked out into the shop. The man was lying back with closed eyes.

"Hurry up," he said.

"Yes, sir," replied the pseudo barber, getting his soap and brush ready.

The man closed his eyes again. There were dark rings under them.

"Judging from the face, he's a bad 'un," said the detective, but he proceeded with the shaving as though it had been his business.

"I heard a good story the other day," he said, lathering his man, "it was about a curious crime."

"Crime!" gasped the man. "What sort of a crime?"

"Murder," replied the detective, trying the razor on his thumb-nail. "The most curious part about it was that the evidence that convicted the man was furnished by a barber. It seems that the murderer had left behind him a single hair from his moustache.

"This was found by a detective, and enabled him to trace his man. It was just such a hair as this"—and the detective held in one hand the hair he had found. "When the man went to be shaved, the barber drew a hair out of the man's moustache, so!"

He plucked out a hair with a quick movement, and held the two beneath the powerful magnifying glass he carried.

"The barber examined the hairs beneath a glass, as I have done," continued the detective, "then he turned to the man, and said, 'There can be no doubt, it is absolutely certain, you are the murderer of Bessie Sanders!'"

The young man leapt from the chair with a hoarse cry. There was no need for confession. His face proclaimed his guilt.

It was a terrible ordeal. Who could have his guilt thus thrust upon him and be calm?

The detective put down his razor.

With a quick plunge the man seized it, and tried to bring it across his throat. But the detective was too quick and too strong. "And now Mr. Edward Trevelyan," he said.

"Yes," replied a pleasant voice at his elbow, "what can I do for you?"

Here was a surprise that was too much for the detective. He turned, and confronted another young man, who in many respects was a counterpart of the other, especially so as to the moustache.

The real barber, astonished at what he had seen and heard, now came out into his shop.

"Who is this?" asked the detective.

"Percy Manton. Everybody about here knows him."

"Well, Percy Manton. I arrest you for the murder of Bessie Sanders."

"No you don't. Nobody arrests me. I did it, and Heaven knows I'm glad to get it off my mind, and this is how I do it."

There was another razor lying near, and this time he seized it and carried it to his throat, with such force as to nearly sever his head.

The explanation was simple enough, and the detective had easily deduced it. Percy Manton, a reckless and dissipated fellow, had been in love with Bessie, and she with him. Indeed they had been married secretly, as the registrar's record showed. That was a year ago. In the meantime, Bessie Sanders' father had failed and was practically a beggar, though his daughter did not know of it, and he did not intend that she should until he had tried to recover. Percy Manton had learnt this, and as he had meantime made considerable love to another young lady, whose wealth was great and certain, he wished to get rid of the old love and take on with the new. So much for the motive for the murder.

Bessie had kept her love affair secret from her chum, for Miss Deering knew Percy Manton as a worthless character, and would not have permitted his entrance to the room.

So Bessie, to effect this, had said that it was Edward Trevelyan she wished to have call, and Miss Deering, loving him as she did, and believing him to be good and true, permitted it. The way the selfish plot worked out is easily seen, Percy Manton knew that Miss Deering thought him to be Trevelyan when he called, and he knew that his crime would be laid upon the other man unless by good luck it passed for suicide.

Miss Deering, loving Trevelyan herself passionately, had, nevertheless like a noble and loving woman, kept silence, and kept most discreetly out of the way when the visit occurred.

But her reward came. The terrible tragedy revealed the deception under which she had laboured. The fact was that Trevelyan really loved her. But, when ever they had chanced to see each other, she believing him the lover of her friend, had treated him most coldly, and that he kept his distance. All this is changed now for the faithful little schoolgirl won the love she craved, and she has long been the happiest of happy girls.

H. Clifford.

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can safely **Reduce Weight and cure Corpulency permanently** by taking **TRILENE TABLETS** (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are small, agreeable, harmless, and never fail to IMPROVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without Change of Diet. An English Countess writes: "*Your Trilene Tablets act admirably.*"

Send 2s. 6d. to **THE TRILENE CO.**, Sole Proprietors, **66 Finsbury Pavement, London.**

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Princess Liechtenstein writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send your excellent tablets directly." Mr. Canham, 87 Alexandra Road, Norwich: "Tablets cured my wife of extreme stoutness; it has never returned." Mrs. H. Cox, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The Tablets reduced me 1½ stone." Mrs. S. Alexander, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They reduced me 23lb., and I am cured." Mrs. Beasley-Smith, of Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, says: "Tablets have reduced me very much." Mrs. Crossley, of Rose Hill, Torver, Coniston, says: "I weigh much less and can breathe so much easier; I am delighted."

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A woman cannot possibly look plain or unattractive if she uses the famous DR. ROSE'S FACE PERLES. She will be as fair as a lily, and wrinkles will not appear until she is far advanced in life. This may seem impossible to you, but it is the plain truth. The Perles are not a cosmetic, remember, but a food for the skin. They make ladies of 40 look to be less than 30. If from any cause you have reason to be ashamed of your face, you should commence taking these famous Perles without delay. They are bound to effect an improvement in your appearance. Thousands of men and women, with unhealthy, blotchy or muddy skins, are grateful for having taken DR. ROSE'S FACE PERLES

WHY NOT TRY THEM? —If you would like to test DR. ROSE'S FACE PERLES send three stamps for dainty booklet, "Beauty is Power," and FREE TRIAL BOX, or 2/6 postal order for a large-size box. All boxes sent in plain packages, post free. Address: The Rose Remedy Co. Dept , St Albans, England.

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A New Feature.

In Confidence.

Conducted by Madge Morris.

I HAVE been invited by the Editor of *Short Stories* to conduct this new feature. He considers that I am qualified to offer advice on matters of the heart, because I have given the subject very careful study since I was quite a young child.

To those readers of *Short Stories* who do not see *Pearson's Weekly* my name will be unfamiliar; therefore, before going further, I think it will be as well for me to introduce myself—or, rather, to allow myself to be introduced to you by the Editor of *Pearson's Weekly*. To do this, all that is necessary is for me to reproduce here a paragraph which appeared in a recent number of that paper:

I AM going to tell you in confidence quite a little romance which affects a charming young lady whose work you will soon have an opportunity of enjoying. About a fortnight ago I received a letter, asking that the writer might have a personal interview with me. Two days later a charming young lady was ushered into my room. Her name (and I have her full permission for giving it) is Madge Morris. She very rapidly and clearly laid her case before me. She was engaged to a hard-working young clerk whose position was a modest one and whose finances would not permit of his marrying for many years unless he got some substantial increase in his salary. As this seemed so far off, Miss Madge determined to make money on her own account. She has a good education, but has never learnt a trade or profession. Her parents, who, though not well-off, are proud, will not let her work in a shop or factory. They do not object to her marriage with the young man, whom they like. When Miss Morris got so far in her narrative she smilingly handed me a manuscript, and said that she had determined, by writing articles and stories, to save enough money to enable her to get married! As she had never written in her life before, I had my doubts about the value of the stuff. After reading it, however, I saw at once she had some strikingly brilliant ideas, and knew how to put them down. The result of her visit was an order for half-a-dozen articles on a subject she had chosen—"Lessons in Love-Making"—with the promise of an order for more if the first series were appreciated by our readers. This, then, is the origin of the new series which begins in our next issue. I hope you will like it. And remember, as you read it, that its publication is the result of a bright young girl's earnest determination to make money enough to marry the man she loves.

After this paragraph appeared, the series of articles entitled "Lessons in Love-Making" was published, and at the present moment I am contributing another series entitled "Love Problems," which are appearing on the "Home Notes" page of *Pearson's Weekly*.

I hope that you won't think me egotistical for telling you all these things. The truth of the matter is that, as I am not at present known to very many of you, I feel it incumbent upon me to let you see that I am qualified to conduct this new feature.

The lines on which they will be run are as follows:

Any young girl or young man whose love affairs are not running smoothly—and, of course, when it is true love it will not run smoothly—is invited to consult with me. I don't want to pose as a sort of lady Solomon, who will mete out justice in a domineering sort of fashion. I want to be just who I am, and to offer advice to those who are willing to, at all events, consider it, even if they don't accept it.

There are many points which a young girl or young man in love does not care to discuss with parents or friends, and yet would be willing to write to someone whom they have never seen before and in whom they have a certain amount of confidence. This position I am willing to occupy.

I shall treat every communication in strict confidence—in fact, I don't want even your name and address, a *nom de plume* will do quite as well. All I ask is that any love problem you may set before me to unravel shall be a genuine one; I don't want to waste my own time or the time of my readers in discussing points in a case which is simply concocted in idle moments by some idle young person.

And now, if you feel that I have justified your confidence in me, don't fail to let me know when you are in trouble, and I will do my best to give you a helping hand.

This feature will not be confined to love affairs only—that is, to those between single young men and young women—but tangles that occur in domestic life and even points of etiquette will be dealt with. I am not qualified to tell you how to build a house, or borrow money, or buy a horse, but I am qualified to answer any problem you may care to set into which affairs of the heart enter largely.

All communications should be addressed to me personally.

MADGE MORRIS.

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The Brain Gymnasium.

IN these competitions a prize of £1 1s. will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solution of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £1 1s. will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in, the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award, in addition to the above, either ten of our gold-plated pencil-cases or ten popular novels, to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one side only of the paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium," to reach the Editor, *Short Stories*, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C., by first post on Monday, January 20th, 1902.

Readers are invited to submit puzzles, acrostics, conundrums, word-squares, etc., for publication on this page. A gold-plated pencil-case will be given to each reader whose attempts are used. All attempts must be vouched for as original, and, of course, it is distinctly understood that the sender of a puzzle must neither compete in the competition nor divulge to anyone the solution. Any reader found infringing this rule will be severely dealt with.

No. 19. **BEHEADINGS.**

1. I am in the future—behead me, and I am a bird.
2. I am a rock—behead me, and I am a sound; behead me again, and I am a number.
3. I am to find fault—behead me, and I am not warm; again, and I am not young.
4. I am an implement—behead me, and I am a meanly-built house.
5. I am to slay—behead me, and I am not well.

No. 20. **SQUARE WORD.**

From equivalents of the following form a square word:
To penetrate.
Courage.
The plural of the general name of a well-known plant.
A happening.
Part of a verb meaning to be quiet.

No. 21. **ACROSTIC.**

The initials of the following read downwards will form the name of a popular game:

An English river.
A town in India.
A town in Switzerland.
A town in the North of England.
A river in Germany.
A town in Ireland.
A town in Scotland.
One of the British possessions.
An English county,
A country in Europe.
A mountain in Arabia.

No. 22.

A GEOGRAPHICAL GUESS-WHAT.

A boy named (a town in Australia) went for a walk with his sister, whose name was (a lake in Switzerland). (A lake in Switzerland) presently got a (a town in North Germany) in her foot, and (a town in Australia) was in great (cape in North America) lest he should not be able to get it out, as it was so (islands in the west of Scotland), but at last it came out. While they were resting in the shade, and eating the (islands in the Pacific) which their mother had given them, the (island off the coast of Scotland) became (a sea of Europe) and (a bay in New Zealand), and they had to hasten home before the storm. As they were returning, they saw a (islands off Tasmania) with a (village in Scotland) which he had shot. Before they reached home it began to rain, and the children had to (a cape of North America) to escape a wetting.

No. 23. **ENIGMA.**

I never was in a territory,
But I'm always in a state.
I have never been in destiny,
Yet ever I am in fate.

I am not be seen in the clear blue sky,
But I live in the deep blue sea,
I am found in the clustering islands,
But not in the greenwood tree.

Without me you cannot travel,
I am needful in the way,
And though I am shut out of every night,
I come proudly in by day.

Now children should easily tell what I am,
'Tis a simple name to say;
I'm not in their romps, but I'm in their games,
And I help them in their play.

No. 24. **ADDED WORDS.**

Add a word meaning to strike to a possessive pronoun and then add a preposition. The whole forms an adverb of time.

Whether You Are a Pretty Girl or a Plain Brainy Girl

It is always interesting to know other people's opinion of yourself, especially when that opinion is absolutely unbiassed.

If you want to know what sort of a person you are,
If you want to know.

WHETHER YOU ARE GENEROUS OR MEAN,
WHETHER YOU ARE INDUSTRIOUS OR LAZY,
WHETHER YOU ARE CARELESS OR CAREFUL,
WHETHER YOU ARE COLD OR LOVABLE,
WHETHER YOU ARE NICE OR OTHERWISE,

Send a specimen of your handwriting to

RANEE, 32 Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, Strand, W.C.

Inclosing six penny stamps and a stamped addressed envelope.

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Trial Package FREE

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At times he was so helpless that he had to take to morphine, and after considerable doctoring he gave up in despair. He began studying into the causes of **rheumatism**; after much experimenting he finally hit upon a combination of drugs which completely cured him. The result was so beneficial to his entire system that he called his new-found remedy "Gloria Tonic." Those of his friends and relatives and neighbours suffering from rheumatism were next cured, and Mr. Smith concluded to offer his remedy to the world. But he found the task a difficult one, as nearly everybody had tried a hundred or more remedies, and they couldn't be made to believe that there was such a thing as a cure for rheumatism. But an old gentleman from Sequin wrote him saying if Mr. Smith would send him a sample he would try it, but as he had suffered forty-one years and wasted a fortune with doctors and advertised remedies, he wouldn't buy anything more until he knew it was worth something. The sample was sent; he purchased more, and the result was astonishing. He was completely cured. This gave Mr. Smith a new idea, and ever since that time he has been sending out free sample packages to all who apply. The result is that he is now the happy possessor of **thousands of testimonials** from people throughout the world who have been both greatly benefited and **entirely cured** by "Gloria Tonic." Prominent physicians had to admit that "**Gloria Tonic**" is a positive success, among them Dr. Quintero, of the University of Venezuela, to whom it was recommended by the United States Consul. In thousands of other instances the result has been the same. It cured many cases which defied Hospitals, Drugs, Electricity, and Medical Skill.

JOHN A. SMITH.

"Gloria Tonic" **cured** Mrs. H. Bester, of Welton, near Daventry, who has suffered for years. Mr. L. Pinkey, 3 Well Lane, Bridlington, a martyr to Rheumatism for 27 years, has been entirely cured through its use. Mr. J. Holden, of 28 Angles Road, Streatham, S.W., is an enthusiast over "Gloria Tonic." A neighbour of Mr. Holden, Mr. J. Crampton, 24 Angles Road, Streatham, S.W., says: "I can recommend 'Gloria Tonic' to all who suffer with Rheumatism, as I am thankful to say that your remedy has **cured me entirely.**"

The following people have also been entirely **cured** through the use of "Gloria Tonic" attested to by testimonials which they have sent me: Mrs. J. Brewer, 59 St. Ann's Rd., Barking, E.; Mr. T. Marsh, 190 Bury New Rd., Whitefield, Lancs.; Mr. J. Metcalf, Hill Gill Farm, Mallerstang, Kirkby Stephen; Mrs. West, The Club, Surbiton: Mr. G. Chennells, 11 Waterend, near Hemel Hempstead; Mrs. G. Hiron, 39 Stanley St., Queen's Rd., S.W.; Mr. E. Guest, Bissell St., Quinton, near Birmingham; Mrs. Sanderson, 22 West Park Rd., Newport, Mon.; Mr. L. Leyshon, 2 Gwindy Terrace, Pentrechwyth; Mrs. W. Smith, Appiehouse, Tronston, Sandwick, Stromness; Mr. J. Helmsley, Hadlow Down, near Uckfield; Mr. P. Haslem, 32 Tanners Terrace, Ramsbottom; Mr. G. Mackay, Embo Dornoch, Sutherlandshire; Mr. J. Little, South Marston, Stretton St. Margaret's, Swindon.

Can I offer you better proofs of the merits of my remedy? These are only a few of **hundreds of testimonials** of recent date which I now hold.

On receipt of a postal card or a letter from you, mentioning this paper, you will receive by return of post, FREE, a trial package of "Gloria Tonic" a booklet on Rheumatism, and other literature of great interest to sufferers. Address—

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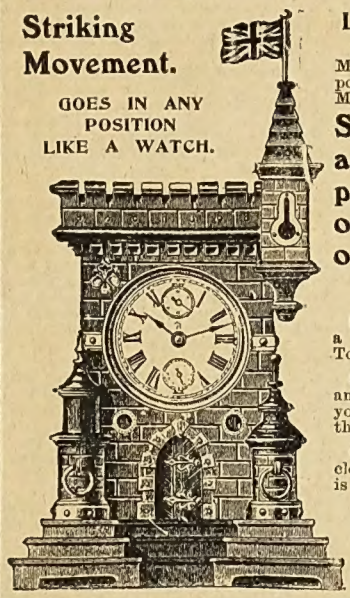

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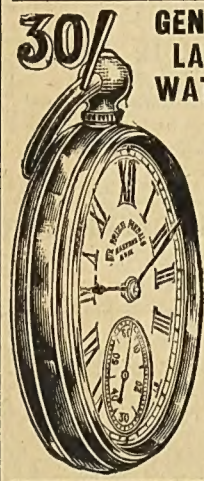

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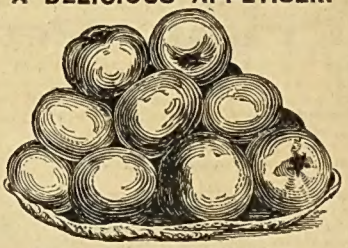

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